Introduction to Magic

Rituals and Practical Techniques for the Magus

JULIUS EVOLA
and the UR Group

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Editor's Note

Introduction to Magic is a complex book that presented numerous hurdles for both translator and editor. A primary example of this can be seen in the Italian title *Introduzione alla Magia quale scienza dell'Io* (literal translation: "Introduction to Magic as a Science of the I"). The fundamental theme of the book concerns the training and development of this "Io," a term for which it is difficult to find a suitable English equivalent. The word *ego* is not an appropriate choice, in part due to connotations from modern psychoanalysis. Use of the English first person "I" as an impersonal noun is awkward, and therefore the best solution was to utilize the term *Self,* capitalized as a proper noun.

Other obstacles in translation arose from the unusual nature of the book's contents. The contributors came from various backgrounds and their individual writing styles reflect this. It would be inappropriate to reduce them to one homogeneous prose; the reader will therefore notice inconsistencies among the authors and articles, especially with regard to unique preferences for capitalization, punctuation, and emphasis. We have generally left these idiosyncrasies intact, in order to convey accurately what the original readers of the journal *Ur* had in front of them.

When dealing with foreign documents (e.g., the Tantric and Buddhist texts, or the Mithraic Ritual) we have not referred to modern translations of these works, but instead have returned to sources closer to those texts that the UR Group used when preparing their own translations.

We have introduced some clarifications to aid the modern reader. Translations are given for most of the Latin words and phrases, and we have also provided transliterations of ancient Greek terms when this serves to illuminate the author's message (notably in the essay "Knowledge of the Symbol" by "Pietro Negri").

The footnotes throughout the book are either from the author of a given essay or, when indicated, by the UR Group as a whole (although, as Renato

Del Ponte points out in his preface, these notes were most likely written by Evola). We have provided some additional footnotes, which are always indicated as "Editor's notes." The precedent for some of these notes comes from the German edition of *Introduction to Magic*, edited and translated by Dr. H. T. Hansen, to whom we are indebted for allowing us to draw from his work. A grateful acknowledgment is also given to Joscelyn Godwin, who made an immense amount of contributions toward revising and refining the English translation of *Introduction to Magic*. The degree to which this edition reflects the subtleties of meaning originally invested into the material by the UR Group is largely due to his input.

A piece of advice offered by Dr. Hansen to German readers of the book is equally valid for the present edition: *Although much effort has been expended in making this translation as clear as possible, we recommend that it be read using the "ears of the heart," for a certain freedom of the translation was unavoidable.*

Preface

Julius Evola and the UR Group

Renato Del Ponte

The collaboration that Julius Evola sought out at the end of the 1920s with the most interesting figures of Italian esotericism to form the famous UR Group, aside from the example it has provided and continues to provide to anyone seriously engaged in the esoteric sciences, is also extremely important in the overall context of Evola's work. For it was precisely during this period that he came to expand his own interests in the real, time-honored realms of Tradition, and at least two of his principal works, *Revolt Against the Modern World* and *The Hermetic Tradition,* are contained in seed-form in some of the monographs published by UR. The attendant experiences with the UR Group should therefore not be neglected, for in order to clarify essential points necessary to a comprehension of the spirit of Evola's lifework, indeed it is necessary to investigate the precedents, limits, and outcomes of their endeavors.

The Preliminaries

The journals *Atanòr* (1924) and *Ignis* (1925), both edited by Arturo Reghini, can be considered direct antecedents of *Ur.*[1] During the two brief years of their existence (*Ignis* enjoyed a fleeting revival in January 1929), these two journals of "initiatic studies" confronted esoteric themes and disciplines

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*This essay originally appeared in R. Del Ponte's *Evola e il magico "Gruppo di Ur": Studi e documenti per servire alla storia di "Ur–Krur,"* published by SeaR Edizioni, Borzano, 1994. It is here translated by Tami Calliope.

1. Arturo Reghini (1878–1946) was born in Florence, the descendant of a very ancient feudal family from Pontremoli that branched out and established themselves in Florence and Rome in the second half of the 1700s. Reghini was one of the most famous Italian scholars of the Tradition in the first half of the twentieth century, the

with a scientific rigor and seriousness uncommon to the heterogeneous spiritualistic environment of the era. The themes, which were always of exceptional interest, ranged from Pythagoreanism and Tantrism to the Kabbalah and the secret documents of Cagliostro's trial. It was here, in Italy, that the writings of René Guénon were first published, including his principal versions of *L'ésotérisme de Dante* (The Esotericism of Dante) and *Le roi du monde* (The King of the World, translated by Reghini), which only later came out in France in 1925 and 1927, respectively. Among Reghini's contributors we find names that will crop up again in the UR Group: Aniceto Del Massa, "Luce" ("Light," pseudonym of Giulio Parise), and, aside from Reghini himself, Julius Evola.

Apart from some critical reviews, Evola, who was then twenty-six years old, contributed a long essay to *Atanòr* in installments on *La potenza come valore metafisico* (Power as a Metaphysical Value), which was later incor-

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major interpreter of Neo-Pythagorean thought, and the exponent of an unmitigated, intransigent, anti-Christian, pagan directive. He exerted considerable influence on Evola's thinking between the years 1924 and 1928, primarily during the period in which he composed his *Imperialismo pagano* (Pagan Imperialism, first published in 1928 and reprinted in 1978). The book's title actually originates from a 1914 article of Reghini's that was later reproduced in the third issue of *Atanòr.*

Reghini was the creator (with E. Frosini and others) of the "Italian Philosophical Rite" (1909) within the circle of contemporary Freemasonry; he also welcomed the English magician Aleister Crowley as an honorary member in 1911. Aside from numerous articles and essays published in the journals *Ultra, Rassegna Massonica, Mondo Occulto,* and *Il Leonardo,* he counted among his many works *Le parole sacre e di passo dei primi tre gradi e il massimo mistero massonico* (The Sacred Passwords of the First Three Degrees and the Greatest Masonic Mystery, 1922, with numerous republications); *Per la restituzione della geometria pitagorica* (An Apology for the Restitution of Pythagorean Geometry, 1935, reprinted in 1978); and *I numeri sacri della tradizione pitagorica massonica* (The Sacred Numbers of the Pythagorean Masonic Tradition, 1947, reprinted in 1978). These last two are now reunited under the title *Numeri sacri e geometria pitagorica* (Sacred Numbers and Pythagorean Geometry, published by I Dioscuri, Genoa, 1988). Other notable works were *Aritmosofia* (1980); *Il simbolismo dodecimale e il fascio etrusco* (Twelve-based Symbolism and the Etruscan Fasces, 1934, reprinted in 1981); and a posthumous collection of articles called *Paganesimo, pitagorismo, massoneria* (Paganism, Pythagorism, and Freemasonry, 1986). Of his principal work, entitled *Dei numeri pitagorici* (On Pythagorean Numbers), divided into three parts, seven books, and a prologue, only the prologue has been recently published (by Ignis, Ancona, in 1991),

porated into *L'uomo come potenza* (Man as Power) in 1926.[2] In *Ignis* he published essays on Steiner, on "the feminine," and a lecture, "Dionysius," which was included in 1926 in the small volume *L'individuo e il divenire del mondo* (The Individual and the Becoming of the World).[3]

Apart from his work in the artistic field of the avant-garde, which does not concern us here, by this time Evola had to his credit the powerful *Saggi sull'idealismo magico* (Essays on Magic Idealism, 1925) and countless contributions to spiritualist and philosophical journals of the era, such as *Ultra,* a publication of the Independent Theosophical League of Rome, edited by Decio Calvari; *Bilychnis*[4]; and *Idealismo Realistico* (Realistic Idealism). In a letter of his dated 1925 and written on stationery bearing the name of this last journal, he makes it clear that he had already completed *Teoria dell'Individuo Assoluto* (Theory of the Absolute Individual) some

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with an appendix of letters and testimonials. In 1980 Atanòr Editions of Rome published a reprint of the complete collections of *Atanòr* and *Ignis.*

Of late there has been a vast resurgence of interest in Arturo Reghini and his works; see the historic essay by M. Rossi, "*L'interventismo politico-culturale delle riviste tradizionaliste negli anni Venti: Atanòr (1924) e Ignis (1925)*" (The Political-cultural Intervention of Traditionalist Journals in the Twenties), published in *Storia Contemporanea,* XVIII, 3 (June 1987), pp. 457–504; and the even more recent, brief but significant profile by E. Zolla, "Arturo Reghini, Pitagorista" (Arturo Reghini, Pythagorean), published in *Leggere,* 3 (March 1989), pp. 46–47. Many of Reghini's works have been translated into French by Arché Editions of Paris and Milan.

2. *L'uomo come potenza,* completely reworked and revised, reappeared in 1949 as *Lo Yoga della potenza* (The Yoga of Power, published by Bocca, it was later reprinted by Edizioni Mediterranee in 1968; English edition Rochester, Vt.: Inner Traditions, 1992). The original edition, prefaced by an introductory essay by P. Fenili, has been republished by Edizioni Mediterranee in Rome in 1988.

3. *L'individuo e il divenire del mondo* was reprinted in 1976 by Arktos Editions in Carmagnola.

4. All of Evola's articles and reviews from *Bilychnis* are now compiled in *J. Evola: I saggi di Bilychnis* (The Essays in Bilychnis), published in 1987 by Ar in Padua. Evola was able to contribute to that journal thanks to the interest of the historian Giovanni Costa, his friend and "factotum" in editing.

time before (probably in 1924), which would later be published in two volumes at two different times (1927 and 1930) by Bocca as *Teoria* and as *Fenomenologia dell'individuo assoluto* (Theory and Phenomenology of the Absolute Individual).[5] Among the contributors to *Ultra* we find other members of the future UR Group: the poet Arturo Onofri and the Anthroposophist Giovanni Colazza.[6]

In a famous novel by Sibilla Aleramo (1876–1960), *Amo, dunque sono* (I Love, Therefore I Am), published by Mondadori in Milan in 1927, we can retrace these circles in some detail.[7] Evola, with whom the author had had a brief and stormy love affair around 1925, appears in her novel as Bruno Tellegra and is depicted, in the wake of their relationship, as a sinister, almost Luciferian figure: "Bruno Tellegra was made more to succumb to the charms of a devil rather than an angel," she writes on p. 152. "He is inhuman, an icy architect of acrobatic theories, vain, vicious, perverse . . ." is her description of him on p. 148. But the true protagonist of the novel is unquestionably "Luciano," that is, Giulio Parise, who would be known as "Luce" in the future UR Group; he is the hero-lover of the book, which

5. "This piece of work [*Essays on Magical Idealism*] is only the introduction to another, must vaster and more systematic one—*The Theory of the Absolute Individual*—on which I have been working for many years." Quote from a letter from J. Evola to the philosopher A. Pastore. Although the letter is not dated, it was surely written sometime in 1925; the original copy is in the archives of the Centro Studi Evoliani (Center for Evolian Studies) in Pontremoli. In it Evola mentions "a common acquaintance—your Aleramo . . . ."

All of these philosophical works by Evola have been republished in recent times: *Teoria,* revised and corrected, by Edizioni Mediterranee in 1973; *Fenomenologia dell'Individuo Assoluto* by Edizioni Mediterranee in 1974; and *Saggi sull'idealismo magico* by Alkaest in 1981.

6. For Evola's contributions to *Ultra* and its circle, cf. R. Del Ponte's bibliographic notes to the second edition of *L'individuo e il divenire del mondo,* pp. 25–29.

7. In the 1947 edition that came out after the war, the chapter concerning Bruno Tellegra—i.e., Evola—was omitted. It was later reintegrated into the recent edition of 1982 published by Oscar Mondadori. Cf. also S. Aleramo's *Diario di una donna* (Diary of a Woman), brought out by Feltrinelli in Milan in 1978, pp. 352–353, and *Sibilla Aleramo e il suo tempo* (Sibilla Aleramo and Her Times), an illustrated biography edited by B. Conti and A. Morino and published by Feltrinelli in 1981, pp. 207, 208, 212, 214, 342.

takes place in 1926. He is also possessed by desire, striving and straining to "become a magus." On p. 21 we find: "It required all your infinite seduction for me not to flee when I found out that you, too, belonged to the sect of the magi." And on p. 50: "Luciano, Luciano, and you want to become a magus! You've told me you've already worked fantastic things, things not only fantastic to speak of, but carried out in truth."

From this novel, in fact, we find out that "Luciano" spent that summer in the company of a magus in a "tower in the midst of the sea. A tumbledown lookout on a deserted rock" (p. 15). The magus was Arturo Reghini, of whom "Luciano" was a fervent friend and disciple; the tower was the tower of Scalea, in the northern Tyrrhenian, and belonged to the mysterious Master who initiated Reghini into Pythagoreanism and who was at the source of Reghini's mission in the inner circle of Italian Freemasonry.[8]

It is evident that the material contained in journals such as *Ignis* had more than a purely speculative value, as is shown especially by the writings of "Luce" on the "*Opus magicum*: 'Gli specchi'—'Le erbe' " (The Magical

8. "We were together more than once in Calabria, the land of Klingsor, in one of those powerful towers erected long ago to defend the coast. The tower had been raised on a rocky platform resting on the sea floor, totally isolated until a few years ago, now joined to the continent by a thin tongue of sand. . . . In that strange environment, isolated from any contact with the world, without any cares other than providing food and water for ourselves, the days and nights passed as if lived in a world of fairy tale." (G. Parise, from "Nota sulla vita e l'attività massonica dell'Autore" [Notes on the Life and Masonic Activities of the Author], preface to Arturo Reghini's *Considerazioni sul rituale dell'apprendista libero muratore* [Considerations Concerning the Ritual of the Apprentice Freemason], published by Studii Iniziatici in Naples, probably in 1949, and later reprinted by Phoenix in Genoa in 1978. See pp. IX–X.)

Concerning the encounter with Armentano (who was an officer in the army) Parise adds: "A. R., as a student in Pisa, heard his name called out one evening by an unknown young man; they were together, and with others, for many years, in a communion of work and spirit. . . . That encounter was the very origin of A. R.'s mission within Italian Masonry and Universal Masonry, in the field of politics and in the field of esoteric studies . . . to guide Masonry back to its initiatic function, pruning out its inferior elements, and to direct society toward an order based on spiritual values" (pp. VI–VII).

In the tower of Scalea, Reghini revised the text of the Italian translation of *De Occulta Philosophia* by Cornelius Agrippa (Fidi Editors, Milan, 1926; later published by Edizioni Mediterranee, Rome, in 1972), which he prefaced with a remarkable essay of almost two

Work: "The Mirrors"—"The Herbs") in the issues of August/September and November/December 1925, but the foundations were not yet laid for a genuine collective endeavor.

The UR Group and Its Journals

Conditions propitious to such collaborative effort came about when Evola—probably encouraged by Reghini—formed the UR Group around himself with the intention of gathering up the preceding tendencies and exigencies with particular emphasis on their practical and experimental aspects.[9]

Their seat was in Rome, where the group began its activities toward the beginning of 1927. It was led under the alternating direction (at least until September 1928) of the most magically gifted members, foremost among whom were Arturo Reghini and Julius Evola. One result was that dependent offshoots, or "research groups," formed in other cities, as is attested by the written piece "Instructions for Magical Chains,"[10] dealing with "the period of training that individual groups will carry out separately and with the aim of a primary organization and a fluid construction." It is certain

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hundred pages on "E. C. Agrippa e la sua magia" (Henry Cornelius Agrippa and His Magic).

With regard to "Luciano" or "Luce" from the UR Group—i.e. Giulio Parise (1902–1970)—aside from his contributions to *Ignis* and *Ur* and the preface cited above, we know of no other writings except for the translation of and commentary on the *Rituale del Libero Muratore d'Inghilterra* (Ritual of the Freemason in England), first degree (extract from *L'Acacia Massonica,* 1948) and second degree (extract from *L'Acacia Massonica,* 1949); his text and commentary in the booklet *La tegolatura in grado di Apprendista* (Tiling in the Apprentice Degree, 1944); and his presentation of various Masonic writings by Goblet D'Alviella.

9. UR takes its name from the phonetic value *u-r,* present in both the Chaldaic and the Runic. In the first case is signifies "fire" and in the second, "bull" (cf. the aurochs or wild bull) and also "Aries." [In modern German, the prefix "ur" denotes something primordial, ancient, or ancestral. Evola, a fluent German speaker, was certainly aware of this connotation for the name, and undoubtedly appreciated it. — Editor's note]

10. Cf. *Ur,* II (1928), pp. 1–2 and 32–42. The explanation can also be found, with some slight modifications, in the third edition of 1971.

that from the end of 1927 to 1929, one of these groups existed in Genoa, consisting of five people whose names have since been lost.[11]

Thus were "magic chains" created and, while on the one hand studies were carried out and corrected interpretations of ancient texts were acquired for practical use, on the other hand they proceeded toward the "creation" and retrieval of forces and subtle influences that would serve to support the collective activity of the group.

From this common travail a new journal was born: *Ur*, a monthly publication of monographs written by certain members of the group based on their own experiences and studies. At the end of each year the monographs were to be collected and bound into volumes.[12] The first isssue of *Ur* was printed at the end of January 1927; in the course of that year, ten issues were published in all, two of which were double issues (July/August and November/December). In a loose editorial insert to Number 11/12, the last issue of 1927, entitled "*Ur* nel 1928. Ai lettori" (*Ur* in 1928—To Its Readers), it was stated that the publication had been "followed with sympathetic attention in the most varied circles: from isolated and unknown rural workers to famous politicians[13] and university professors. We are certain that this attention will be sustained throughout the new cycle. For our part, we will give all we can give . . ."

In 1927 *Ur* described itself as a "journal with indications for a science of the Self, issued under the direction of J. Evola." But in the first issue of 1928, January/February, it defines itself instead as a "journal of esoteric

11. Cf. "Experienze di catena" (Experiences of the Chain) in *Krur*, I, 3 (1929), pp. 143–147. From this article, dated Genoa, March 1929, we can deduce that in September 1928 "the director of the Group in Rome" (Reghini? Evola?) had traveled to the capital city of Liguria to establish "a linking of the chain." This is presented, with fewer details, in the second edition published by Bocca in 1956; then, for reasons unknown, Evola omitted it from the third edition of 1971. Cf. also R. Del Ponte's "Postilla ad 'Ur'" (Marginal Notes to "Ur") in *Arthos*, III, 7 (September/December 1974), pp. 134–136. The director of the group in Genoa is said to have formed part of the Kremmerzian chain of Myriam.

12. Bear in mind that not all those who prepared or participated in the labors of the group worked on or wrote monographs. This is one of the reasons most of their names are unknown to us. According to some people, Moretto Mori di Arezzo and Amerigo Bianchini participated in the Pythagorean-Masonic group linked to Reghini, but no documents have been found to support this.

13. This is quite possibly a reference to Duke Giovanni Colonna di Cesarò.

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sciences under the direction of J. Evola, P. Negri, G. Parise," an initial sign that those members connected to the Pythagorean-Masonic trend—Reghini (pseudonym "P. Negri") and Parise—initiated an attempt to grab hold of the reins of the group and its journal, which was, however, always under the leadership and responsibility of Julius Evola.

Eight issues emerged during the course of 1928, four of which were double issues (January/February, March/April, July/August, and November/December). Starting with the June issue, certain "elements of sharp and serious critique toward all that has a relationship with esotericism in today's culture" were included. That is to say, they printed a list of the publications they received, accompanied by concise comments that were often very effective in their caustic immediacy, especially when dealing with Catholic circles.[14] For this reason, but also because of a series of polemical articles on the relationship between Fascism and Catholicism that Evola had published in Bottai's *Critica Fascista* and Arpinati's *Vita Nova* in the second half of 1927,[15] and above all due to the appearance in the spring of 1928 of his book *Imperialismo pagano* (Pagan Imperialism),[16] *Ur* was

14. We have reprinted all these pieces in their entirety, accompanied by our own notes and commentary, in R. Del Ponte, *Evola e il magico "Gruppo di Ur,"* Borzano, SeaR Edizioni, 1994. The listing of "Publications Received" that anticipates "L'arco e la clava" (The Bow and the Club) from Evola's pages of *La Torre* (1930) and "Diorama Filosofico" (Philosophical Diorama; 1934–1943) was omitted in the next two editions of *Introduzione alla Magia.* Deplorably, it is also missing from the reprints of *Ur* and *Krur,* which came out respectively in 1980 and 1981, published by Tilopa of Rome. Nor did they reproduce the journal's covers, on the back of which, in fact, were printed "harsh criticisms" and "savage attacks."

15. Cf. J. Evola's "Fascismo antifilosofico e tradizione mediterranea" (Anti-philosophical Fascism and the Mediterranean Tradition), published in the *Critica Fascista* on June 15, 1927; "Imperialismo pagano" (Pagan Imperialism) in *Vita Nova* in November of 1927; "Il fascismo quale volontà d'impero e il cristianesimo" (Fascism as the Will to Imperial Rule and Christianity), published in *Critica Fascista* on December 15, 1927.

16. Atanòr, Rome; later reprinted by Ar, Padua, in 1978. In 1933 a German edition was published by Armanen-Verlag of Leipzig, completely revised and expanded for Germany: *Heidnischer Imperialismus,* now retranslated into Italian under the auspices of the Center for Traditional Studies in Treviso (1991). For this reason, Evola was considered in the Germany of that time as one of the principal exponents of a trend (in truth, nonexistent) of "pagan Ghibellinism" within the core of Fascism. In 1994 a new edition of the text of 1928 was published by Arktos in Carmagnola, with a full historical introduction edited by myself.

subjected to heavy clerical attacks during that period. Among these it is curious and interesting to note the charges of the future Pope Paul VI, Giovanni Battista Montini, who, in the pages of *Studium*, accused the "magi" united around Evola of "abuse of thought and word . . . rhetorical aberrations, fanatical reevocations and superstitious works of magic."[17]

In was amid this climate, in October 1928, that certain members of the inner circle of the UR Group—i.e., Reghini and Parise—who maintained a close relationship with Freemasonry (officially dissolved by the Fascist regime in November of 1925), attempted to evict Evola from the leadership of the group and the journal.[18] This attempt failed, but it signaled the end of the "operative" period of the Roman magical coterie. On the inside front cover of the October 1928 issue, there appeared a precise statement of contrary stance (especially with regard to Parise) that reaffirmed "an absolute unity of direction" in the name of the sole director responsible for the journal, Julius Evola.

A sharp journalistic controversy ensued (accompanied, however, by reciprocal libel actions for defamation and plagiarism, which eventually petered out) between Evola on one side[19] and Reghini on the other. In fact Reghini revived his old publication *Ignis* for the occasion, though only one

17. Cf. G. B. M., "Filosofia: una nuova rivista," (Philosophy: A New Review) in *Studium*, XXIV, 6 (June 1928), pp. 323–324. We have reprinted this article in its entirety in our study of the UR Group (see note 14). On that occasion the entire entourage of Vatican journalism was ranged against Evola, from *L'Osservatore Romano* to *Avvenire d'Italia*, as well as the Fascist publicity supporting their accord with the Vatican: *Educazione Fascista, Bibliografia Fascista,* and even *Critica Fascista,* which had printed some of Evola's first articles. (The *Concordat* with the Vatican was signed on February 11, 1929, and would strip away every residual hope of action within the circle of the Fascist officials, whether attempted by Evola or by Reghini.)

18. There may be a reference to this when G. Parise (in his "Nota sulla vita . . .," p. XI) wrote: "Two reunions were held, attended by the most trusted members—one in June of 1928, and a second one a month later. For the fulfillment of our projected intent, we were also aware of the fact that certain organisms were still very capable . . . headed by the Rite of Memphis and Mizraim [sic], the Rito Filosofico, the Martinists, and the Templars."

19. Cf. also the insert "To the Readers" in *Ur* numbers 11 and 12; the six loose pages inserted in *Krur* number 2, "A Challenge to 'Ignis,' " which was a particularly controversial and antagonistic piece, never reprinted and today unknown by those who have spoken or speak of the UR Group. Cf. also the back cover of *Krur,* numbers 9–11, pp. 351–352. In our study (see note 14) we have reprinted all these texts.

issue came out, in January of 1929.[20] For these reasons, in the third and last year of its existence, the UR Group journal changed its name to *Krur.*[21] "For various reasons the editorial group comprised of J. Evola, P. Negri, and G. Parise is hereby dissolved. However, J. Evola, together with all the other contributors, who are directly responsible to him and who answer to the pseudonyms of *Ea, Abraxa, Iagla, Leo, Tikaipôs, Oso, Krur,* will continue to publish regularly in 1929, joined by new members, but with directives that will remain absolutely the same. The only change will be that instead of *'Ur,'* the issues will now bear the legal title of the new journal *'Krur,'* the exclusive property of our director."[22]

From Esotericism to Traditional Action

Advance notice was given of some new changes in projects and action: "*Krur* intends to link itself more explicitly to a vaster movement, which is affirmed on the one hand by the philosophical work of J. Evola (a work that will serve as a defensive wall around our Sciences in regard to contemporary philosophical and critical thought); and that on the other hand acts in diverse instances to integrate into the preceding impulse of national renewal the values of a spiritual, Ghibelline, heroic, anti-European imperialism."[23]

20. The last issue of *Ignis,* composed solely of writings by Reghini, Parise, and Aniceto Del Massa, is almost entirely a focused attack on Evola and, in particular, on the recently published book *Imperialismo pagano,* to whose title Reghini evidently laid claim.

21. *Krur* derives from the Sumerian root *k-r, k-u-r,* signifying "residence" or "house," "mountain," and "strength," aside from the phonetic value of *u-r,* explained in note 9. This gave rise to the hieroglyph that appeared on the cover of *Krur,* composed of the Nordic-Atlantic symbol for "resurrection," "tree," and "man"—*ur*—who stands over the "waters" (the "house")—*kr.* Evola was inspired to use this symbol by his readings of Herman Wirth, *Der Aufgang der Menschheit,* Jena, 1928, p. 202. Cf. "Ea" (J. Evola), "Sul simbolismo dell'anno" (On the Symbolism of the Year), included in the third volume of *Introduzione alla Magia.* The cover of *Ur* bore instead the image of Mithras killing the bull. The hieroglyph "Krur" was adopted again in the 1970s by various Centers for Evolian Studies that developed first in Italy, then spread throughout Europe.

22. Editorial insert "To the Readers" in *Ur,* II, 11–12 (1928), which we have reproduced in our study (see note 14).

23. *Ibid.* For the true significance of Evola's term "anti-European" during this period (in context of his *Revolt Against the Modern World*), cf. J. Evola's *Imperialismo pagano, passim,* and *Il cammino del cinabro* (The Path of Cinnabar), published by Scheiwiller, Milan, in 1972, 2nd ed., *passim.*

Eight issues of *Krur* were published, of which two were double issues (March/April and June/July) and one a triple issue (September–November). In the last issue of the journal (December 1929), the cessation of the group's activities was announced in the editorial insert "Our Activity in 1930—To the Readers": "*Krur* is transforming. Having fulfilled the tasks relative to the technical mastery of esotericism we proposed for ourselves three years ago, we have accepted the invitation to transfer our action to a vaster, more visible, more immediate field: the very plane of Western 'culture' and the problems that, in this moment of crisis, afflict both individual and mass consciousness. In 1930 *Krur* will therefore reemerge in another form: no longer as a monthly journal, but as a bimonthly review of combat, criticism, affirmation and negation. The heroic-magical point of view that we have always held will not be abandoned; in reality it alone will constitute the point of reference and justification for the task of critique and examination of what of an essential nature is published both inside and outside Italy. It is our intention to erect an unbreachable bulwark against the general decline of every value in life; our claim to know and point out vaster horizons, beyond the usual ones of humanity's small constructions; our proposal to stand firm on the ramparts, ready for both defense and offense, isolated and closed to any escape. For all these reasons the title *Krur* will be changed to the title *La Torre* [The Tower], 'a work of diverse expressions and one Tradition.'"[24]

In this way, what had been acquired on the esoteric plane of operative magic came to be integrated—almost by necessity, according to Evola's particular vision—into an existential-political picture, heralding many interesting developments in the sphere of Evola's upcoming activities.

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24. *Ur* and *Krur* had a circulation of about two thousand copies; the bimonthly *La Torre* printed five thousand copies. However, only ten issues of *La Torre* came out (from February 1 through June 15, 1930), its abrupt cessation due to the open hostility, at times even manifested by attempts at physical violence, on the part of certain extreme circles of the Fascist regime. Some erstwhile members of the UR Group contributed to *La Torre,* such as Guido De Giorgio (under the pseudonym of "Zero"), Girolamo Comi, and Domenico Rudatis; the future psychoanalyst Emilio Servadio; Duke Carlo Rossi of Lauriano; and the philosopher Roberto Pavese. These men were destined from that moment forward to enjoy a long period of collaboration with Evola and his publishing activities. An integral republication of *La Torre,* edited by M. Tarchi, was put out by Falcon, Milan, 1977.

Meanwhile, the journal's issues that had been completed over a period of three years were gradually integrated under general and more specific indices, collectively titled *Introduzione alla Magia quale scienza dell'Io* (Introduction to Magic as the Science of the Self), and were compiled into volumes by the subscribers, thus constituting the first edition of the work.[25] After the war, in the months of August and September 1955, the Roman publishing house Bocca reprinted the first two volumes and finally, in May of 1956, the third volume, each of which was revised, corrected, and expanded by Evola himself. These were soon bought up, thus becoming rarities that those interested in the esoteric sciences had to seek out from antiquarian book dealers.[26]

More recently, in 1971, Edizioni Mediterranee of Rome reissued the work—again with detailed revisions by Evola—in a boxed set, at the same time publishing a deluxe edition of 210 copies bound in half-leather and gold-stamped, under the simplified title *Introduzione alla Magia* (Introduction to Magic). In 1985 a German translation of the first volume was based on that edition: *Magie als Wissenschaft vom Ich. Praktische Grundlegung der Initiation,* published by Ansata-Verlag, Interlaken, Switzerland; and in 1997 the second volume appeared as *Schritte zur Initiation,* both translated by Dr. H. T. Hansen.

In the first edition of 1927–1929, serializations appeared of some of Evola's writings that would constitute the initial nucleus of later, very important works. The essay "La tradizione ermetica" (The Hermetic Tradition), which

25. The administration of the journal—i.e., Julius Evola—put together fifty sets bound in parchment and numbered (without the covers and original inserts) for special sale. According to bibliographic norms, one cannot consider these fifty sets (and only these, as someone has asserted) as the "first edition" of *Introduction to Magic;* this designation belongs rather to the collection of all the issues published loose and unbound (which the readers could organize into volumes on their own, using the title pages and general tables of contents of the years included in the last issues of *Ur* in 1927 and 1928 and of *Krur*), consisting of a printing of two thousand copies, as we have mentioned.

26. From the correspondence of René Guénon to Julius Evola during 1947 and 1948, which is in our possession, it is evident that in reality Evola has begun his work of revision on *Ur* and *Krur* many years before the publication of the volumes by Bocca.

Evola had been working on since the year prior,[27] was serialized in issues 5–12 of *Krur,* and later appeared as a book published by Laterza in Bari in 1931 and again in 1948. It was later republished by Edizioni Mediterranee in 1971. In issues 3 and 4 of *Krur,* the essay "L'Aurora dell'Occidente" (The Dawn of the West; inspired in part by the ideas of H. Wirth, see note 21) appeared, which became the nucleus of an essential section of *Rivolta contra il mondo moderno* (Revolt Against the Modern World; first edition 1934, English edition Rochester, Vt.: Inner Traditions, 1995). Other critical essays concerning modern spiritualism were in all likelihood reworked by Evola for the subsequent publication of *Maschera e volto dello spiritualismo contemporaneo* (Mask and Face of Contemporary Spiritualism), published in 1932 and reissued in new editions in 1949 and 1971. All of these sections—along with others that Evola judged insignificant or no longer relevant—were deleted in the edition of 1955–1956, their place taken by new contributions such as Evola's "L'esoterismo, l'inconscio e la psicanalisi" (Esotericism, the Unconscious, and Psychoanalysis) and "Sulle prospettiva magiche secondo Aleister Crowley"—(On Magical Perspectives According to Aleister Crowley—the latter an author completely unknown during the time of *Ur,* as can be seen from their document "Publications Received" of 1928); another, surely written by Evola but signed "Arvo," entitled "Vivificazione dei 'segni' e delle 'prese'" (Revival of "Signs" and "Stances") dedicated to a singular work by Rudolf von Sebottendorff[28]; as well as an essay by René Guénon, writing under the pseudonym "Agnostus," "Su

27. When he presented this work to the editors at Laterza, Evola wrote in his letter of August 23, 1928: "The title could be *On the Hermetic Art* or something else we could think up that might be more attractive to the public. I believe that you remember my name. At one time, Senator Benedetto Croce recommended my work *Individuo Assoluto* to you; it ended up being published by Bocca." And in a letter dated June 13, 1930, he wrote: "Senator Croce has told me that you, at least, are not rejecting the possibility of publishing one of my works on the Hermetic Tradition in your series of esoteric works." [Laterza Archives, Bari, in D. Coli, "Religione e occultismo nella 'casa editrice di Croce'" (Religion and Occultism in "Croce's Publishing House"), in *Passato e Presente,* I, 1 (January–June 1982), p. 167, n. 23.]

28. That is, *La pratica operativa dell'antica massoneria turca* (Operative Practice of Ancient Turkish Masonry), translated into Italian in Turin in 1980. Some experts have expressed various reservations concerning the seriousness of this work by the German adventurer. Cf. D. Bronder, *Prima che Hitler venisse. Storia della "Società Thule"* (Before Hitler Arrived: The History of the "Thule Society," published by Delta-Arktos, Turin, in 1987).

due simboli iperborei" (On Two Hyperborean Symbols)[29]; and finally, the article by "Massimo" (Massimo Scaligero) titled "Sul distacco" (On Detachment),[30] and the important article "Esperienze fra gli Arabi" (Experiences Among the Arabs) by "Gallus."[31] Most of these contributions can be found in the third volume. In its last edition in 1971, there is only one new article of interest, attributable to Evola: "Sulle droghe" (On Drugs) about their particular use in magic.[32]

The Personalities and "Schools" of the UR Group

In conformity with the traditional custom of every esoteric organization, whether Eastern or Western, from the Pythagoreans to the medieval guilds and to the Rosicrucians, the authors of the monographs in *Ur* remained

29. This piece by Guénon was later inserted in the thematic anthology dedicated to the *Symbols of Sacred Science*. In the mutual correspondence between Guénon and Evola lasting to the end of the 1940s, we find pressing invitations by Evola for the French thinker to contribute pieces, whether original to him or not, for the new edition of *Introduction to Magic*—invitations to which Guénon offered a certain resistance of a practical character (legal and editorial questions) rather than an idealistic one. Their correspondence is translated in our study (see note 14).

30. It would be well to emphasize that the Anthroposophist Massimo Scaligero (1906–1980), whose writing appears only in the second edition of *Introduction to Magic,* was never a member of the UR Group, despite what has been so lightly affirmed, without documentation, by others. In fact, Scaligero himself states that he first knew Evola in 1930 (cf. M. Scaligero, "Dionisio," in AA.VV., *Testimonianze su Evola* (Testimonials on Evola), published in Rome in 1973; second edition 1985; see p. 181).

31. "Gallus" was a diplomat, Count Enrico Galli Angelini, born in Rome in 1885, who enjoyed a close relationship with Evola since the 1920s, as is confirmed by a dedication inscribed by Evola in a copy of his *L'uomo come Potenza* that we have examined.

32. Apart from the German translation already mentioned, most of the writings in *Ur* and *Krur* have been translated into French by Archè of Paris and Milan (although some, perhaps the least significant of them, were omitted) in several separate volumes: those by Evola in *Ur & Krur—Introduction à la Magie,"* volume I *(Ur 1927)* in 1983; volume II *(Ur 1928)* in 1984; volume III *(Krur 1929)* in 1985; and those attributed to Evola (signed "Arvo," "Agarda," and "Iagla") in the fourth volume of 1986. Reghini's articles and essays were published in another, separate volume in 1986, while those by De Giorgio ("Havismat") appear in the miscellaneous volume entitled *L'instant et l'Éternité* (The Instant and Eternity), published in 1987, which we will have further occasion to cite.

anonymous, since, as they declared, "their individual selves count for nothing, because everything valid they can offer now is not of their own creation or devising, but instead reflects a collective and objective teaching."[33] For this reason all the contributing writers used symbolic names, such as "Luce," "Abraxas," "Havismat," "Oso," "Arvo," "Taurulus," and so on. Today, after the passage of so many years and the death of almost all of the protagonists of that era, it is both permissible and possible—through research that was by no means easy—to shed a little light on the circles and schools that gave life to the group and on the actual names of most of its members.

It seems that Evola, to whom all the unsigned passages are attributed (and therefore the numerous notes and annotations, prefaces, introductions, and definitive, "formal" revisions of works not his own), as well as the pieces signed "Ea," which he acknowledged explicitly as his,[34] wrote the articles signed "Agarda" and probably also the numerous interesting contributions of "Iagla." It is probable that at least some of the pieces signed "Arvo" are his as well, and we will have more to say on this later.

Among those who became the closest of Evola's friends and collaborators, from that period to the postwar years and beyond, was "Havismat," the Islamicized Catholic Guido De Giorgio (1890–1957). De Giorgio was regarded highly by Guénon as well, as can be seen in a recent publication of their correspondence.[35] Evola himself acknowledged that he was greatly influenced by "Havismat," due to his exceptionally energetic and dramatic conceptions of Tradition.[36]

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33. Introduction to *Introduction to Magic,* volume I, p. 11, of the cited Italian edition of 1971.

34. In an interview in *Arthos,* I, 1 (September–December 1972), p. 10, Evola acknowledges his authorship of the polemic directed toward certain of Guénon's theories, entitled "Sui limiti della regolarita iniziatica" (On the Limitations of Esoteric Regularity), signed by "Ea" in the third volume.

35. Cf. R. Guénon's "23 lettres à Guido De Giorgio (20 novembre 1925–10 février 1930)" (Twenty-three Letters to Guido De Giorgio [20 November through 10 February, 1930] in G. De Giorgio's *L'instant et l'Éternité et autres textes sur la Tradition* (The Instant and Eternity and Other Texts Concerning the Tradition), published by Arché in Milan, 1987, pp. 247–308.

36. For Guido De Giorgio, cf. Julius Evola's *Il cammino del cinabro,* p. 92. De Giorgio's contributions, as well as those of other writers for *Ur,* were reworked and shaped by

Aside from De Giorgio, there was also the Catholic writer and philosopher Nicola Moscardelli, author of a contribution in volume I signed "Sirius" and one in volume II signed "Sirio."

As we have already said, as far as the Pythagorean sphere and Masonic inspiration are concerned, there was Arturo Reghini ("Pietro Negri") and Giulio Parise ("Luce"). Along with them we should include Aniceto Del Massa (1898–1976), an art critic and prolific writer as well as a true scholar of traditional sciences, who contributed to *Krur* under the name "Sagittario," contemporaneously writing for Reghini's *Ignis* in its sole issue of 1929.[37]

But the "school" that contributed the most collaborators and influences to the course taken by the UR Group was without a doubt the school of thought of Rudolf Steiner, generally known as Anthroposophy. Surely this direction was encouraged by the encounters and discussions that took place in the salon of Baroness Emmelina De Renzis, the custodian of Steiner's original Hungarian writings. In fact, she was the first person to introduce Steiner to Italy, by writing the first Italian translation of his work for her friends and those who frequented her salon in Rome.[38] Among these asso-

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Evola. De Giorgio's works also include *La Tradizione romana* (The Roman Tradition), published by Flamen in Milan, 1973; the second edition was brought out by Edizioni Mediterranee in Rome in 1989, a fragmentary work published many years after the author's death; also another posthumous work, *Dio e il poeta* (God and the Poet), which has recently reappeared after years of oblivion, published by La Queste, Milan, in 1985. A study of De Giorgio should not omit the works of Professor Piero Di Vona, beginning with *Evola, Guénon, De Giorgio,* published by SeaR in Borzano in 1993. Translated into French, all but three of Guido De Giorgio's writings that appeared in *Ur, La Torre,* and the "Diorama Filosofico" edited by Evola, as well as the essay "La fonction de l'école" (The Function of the School) and one unpublished piece on the death of Guénon, are contained in the volume cited, *L'instant et l'Éternité,* 1987.

37. It is presumed that Aniceto Del Massa was a Freemason, but this would seem to be contradicted by the fact that during the harshest years of the Italian Social Republic he published a decidedly anti-Semitic pamphlet: *Razzismo–Ebraismo* (Racism–Judaism) through Mondadori (*Quademi de "L'ora,"* 2, Milan, November 1944).

38. See, for example, his translation of R. Steiner's *Theosophy,* published by Aliprandi in Milan in 1922. Baroness De Renzis' home (Via Po, No. 9, Rome 34) served as a center for the sale of all Steiner's works, as did the home of Giovanni Colazza (see note 41) on Corso Italia, No. 6, also in Rome.

ciates were two poets, the more famous one being Arturo Onofri,[39] who gave his signature as "Oso" in his monographs for *Ur.* The other, Girolamo Comi,[40] who later became progressively more Catholic in stance, signed himself as "Gic." The most important among the Anthroposophic collaborators of *Ur* was, however, Giovanni Colazza ("Leo"), who undoubtedly played an essential role in Italian occultism in the first half of the twentieth century.[41] Another Anthroposophist was a famous political exponent, leftist but not Marxist, who it appears wrote articles for *Ur* under the name of "Arvo" (although others identify this pseudonym instead with Evola): Duke Giovanni Antonio Colonna di Cesarò (1878–1940), in whose journal, *Lo Stato Democratico* (The Democratic State), the first of Evola's political

39. Arturo Onofri (Rome 1885–1928) was one of the most important pre-Hermetic Italian poets of the first thirty years of the twentieth century: contributor to *La Voce,* founder of the journal *Lirica* (whose contributing poets included Cardarelli, Borgese, and Baldini), author of the collections *Terrestrità del Sole* (The Terrestriality of the Sun, 1927), *Vincere il drago* (Triumph Over the Dragon, 1928), *Zolla ritorna cosmo* (Clod Returns to Cosmos; posthumous, 1930), *Suoni del Gral* (Sounds of the Grail; posthumous, 1932), and of the important critical essay *Nuovo Rinascimento come arte dell'Io* (The New Renaissance as the Art of the Self, 1925). He also wrote the preface to the first Italian edition (1924) of Steiner's *Occult Science.* Evola and other members of the UR Group (Moscardelli, Colonna di Cesarò, G. Comi) all contributed pieces to a volume edited by Vallecchi in Florence in 1930 honoring Onofri. For more on this poet, see also S. Salucci's *Arturo Onofri,* published by New Italy, Florence, in 1972, and A. Vecchio's "Arturo Onofri nella critica recente" (Arturo Onofri in Recent Critical Studies) in *Cultura e Scuola,* XXIV, 95 (July–September 1985), pp. 49–60.

40. Girolamo Comi (1890–1968), who would later collaborate with Evola on *La Torre* and the "Diorama Filosofico," after a first poetic stage permeated by a pan-sensual naturalism and the influence of Onofri, took up a decidely Catholic position after the war. Among his works are: *Cantico del tempo e del seme* (Canticle of Time and the Seed, 1930), *Necessità dello stato poetico* (Necessities of the Poetic Condition, 1934), *Aristocrazia del catolecismo* (The Aristocracy of Catholicism, 1937), *Sonetti e poesie* (Sonnets and Poems, 1960). For more on Comi, see D. Valli's *G. Comi,* published by Lecce in 1978. In 1987 the J. Evola Foundation in Rome published a collection of letters from Evola to Comi, edited by G. De Turris, *Lettere di Julius Evola a Girolamo Comi (1934–1962).*

41. Giovanni Colazza (1877–1953) directed Massimo Scaligero, by way of "Evolian" positions, toward Anthroposophy. The Roman journal *Graal,* inspired by their ideas, has recently published many of Colazza's writings, among which is a commentary lecture of his on Steiner's *Initiation* (cf. no. 1, pp. 15–22; no. 2, pp. 72–79).

monographs appeared in 1925[42]; Baroness Emmelina De Renzis, whose salon was mentioned earlier, was Duke Giovanni Antonio's cultured and extremely active mother.[43] Also related to the statesman Sidney Sonnino, Giovanni Antonio Colonna di Cesarò was a fairly famous political figure on the Italian scene, sprung up from the ranks of the radical anti-Giolittian democrats and founder of the political party Social Democracy, which in February of 1922 boasted forty-one members of Parliament; he was Postal Minister under Mussolini's first government and later the brilliant driving force behind one of the last anti-Fascist movements in Italy, above all speaking out from the pages of the bimonthly journal *Lo Stato Democratico.*[44]

Moreover, many years later, in 1938, only two years before his death, an interesting and very important work by Duke Colonna di Cesarò was published by La Prora in Milan: *Il "Mistero" delle origini di Roma: Miti e Tradizioni* (The "Mystery" of the Origins of Rome: Myths and Traditions). Apart from the obvious influence of Steiner, this work bears significant traces and favorable acknowledgment of the thoughts of Julius Evola, as well as remembrances of the works accomplished by the UR Group. For his part, Evola honored the publication of this book in a long and signifi-

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42. Cf. J. Evola's *Il cammino del cinabro,* p. 76. (Evola erroneously cites the journal as "*L'Idea Democratica.*") M. Rossi recently wrote an important essay called "'Lo stato democratico' (1925) e l'antifascismo antidemocratico di Julius Evola" ("The Democratic State" (1925) and the Antidemocratic Antifascism of Julius Evola) in *Storia Contemporanea,* XX, 1 (February 1989).

43. Letters in the Laterza Archives (cf. D. Coli, "Religione e occultismo," p. 169, note 31) show that the Baroness De Renzis obtained permission from Laterza to publish many of Steiner's works between 1919 and 1936, on the advice and recommendation of Giovanni Preziosi, the aggressive editor of *La Vita Italiana.* In fact, various contributors to *La Vita Italiana* were convinced Anthroposophists (e.g., Massimo Scaligero, who would continue to contribute pieces until the era of the R.S.I.). Even in June of 1943, an emphatic apologia on the personality of Rudolf Steiner was printed: cf. E. Martinoli, "Un preannunziatore della nuova Europa: Rudolf Steiner" (A Herald of the New Europe: Rudolf Steiner), in *La Vita Italiana,* XXX, 262, pp. 555–566.

44. M. Rossi: "L'avanguardia che si fa tradizione: l'itinerario culturale di Julius Evola dal primo dopoguerra alla metà degli anni trenta" (The Avant-Garde Which Becomes Tradition: The Cultural Itinerary of Julius Evola from the First Years After the War to the Mid-Thirties), in *Storia Contemporanea,* XXII, 6 (December 1991), p. 1068.

cant essay that appeared in the February 1939 issue of *La Vita Italiana* (Italian Life),[45] in which the book did not go unappreciated, especially for its methodological principles, but also for the fact that it distanced itself with regard to the basic theories that belonged to the [Rudolf] Steiner school.[46]

Everything would lead us to believe that other followers of Steiner also contributed to *Ur,* such as the writer who signed himself "Alba" (Dawn); but in his case, no definite identification has been possible.

A quantitatively inconsistent but highly qualified component of the journals was the "Kremmerzian" element, inspired by the Myriam school of esoteric initiation founded by Giuliano Kremmerz (1861–1930); an active sect existed in Rome since 1926 called the Accademia Virgiliana (Virgilian Academy). Kremmerzian influence in *Ur* was expressed mainly through the contributions of Ercole Quadrelli,[47] who furnished material to Evola

45. Evola's article "Sulla storia 'soterranea' di Roma" (On the "Subterranean" History of Rome) can be read (with no indication of source!) in J. Evola, *La tradizione di Roma* (The Tradition of Rome), published by Ar in Padua in 1977, pp. 187–205.

46. Evola's position regarding Steiner and his disciples on the one hand, and his own thought on the other, seems to present quite a contradiction. While pronouncing himself distinctly against Anthroposophy (e.g., in *Maschera e volto dello spiritualismo contemporaneo*)—but not emphatically enough to satisfy R. Guénon, cf. *Le Voile d'Isis,* 1932, p. 658—he sometimes demonstrated a certain sympathy for the author of *Initiation,* so much so that two photographs of Steiner appear in *Sintesi di dottrina della razza* (A Synthesis of a Doctrine of Race, 1941), interspersed with photos of the two dukes d'Aosta, to illustrate people gifted with the "solar element" in an "ascetic direction" so as to "presage forms of illumination and powers of spiritual penetration." Apart from this, in the later editions of *Introduction to Magic* in 1955–1956 and 1971, Evola retained almost all of the pieces written by Steinerian contributors.

47. Very little is known about Quadrelli, who may not have been among the most famous members of the "Virgilian Academy" of Rome, although he was certainly among the most knowledgeable, judging from his contributions to *Ur.* He wrote an interesting essay on "I 'Fedeli d'amore' " (The "Disciples of Love") in *Progresso Religioso,* 1929, number 2; and the first, precious Italian translation, with annotations, of the *Chymica Vannus* (Chemical Winnowing-Fan) of Parafraste Ocella, which Quadrelli drafted during 1925–1926, but which was not published until 1982, by Arché in Milan.

that the latter then reworked, and which appeared in *Ur* and *Krur* signed by "Abraxas."[48] Direct and wholly unrevised pieces by Quadrelli also appeared; these writings (notable among which is his comment on the *Versi Aurei* [Golden Verses] by Pythagoras) were signed "Tikaipôs."[49]

Regarding the field of Hermetics, it should be remembered that Evola was in direct, personal contact with the Hindu alchemist C. S. Narayânaswami Aiyar Shiyali, author of a monograph now included in the third volume: "Trasmutazione dell'uomo e dei metalli" (The Transmutation of Man and Metals).[50]

None of the people who participated in the UR Group's practical activities during its first two years is still living; nor, it seems, are any of the writers who limited themselves to contributing their work to the journal *Ur.*

Domenico Rudatis (1898–1994), who signed himself "Rud," wrote of an Alpine experience, "Prima ascesa" (First Ascent), very much in the spirit of Evola's sensibilities,[51] whom he had already mentioned in the *Rivista del C.A.I.* (Journal of the Italian Alpine Club). Writing about mountains with a spiritual orientation very close to Theosophy, Rudatis collaborated

48. Concerning the meaning of the term *Abraxas,* Arturo Reghini wrote: "*Abraxas* or *Abrasax,* name indicating the entirety of the manifestations emanating from the supreme God, so frequent on Gnostic and Basilidian monuments, and whose numerical value 365 indicates evidence of its symbolic sense."

49. An editorial note states that a mysterious "Henìocos Aristos" collaborated on the translation of the *Versi Aurei:* this was, in fact, Arturo Reghini.

50. For more on Narayânaswami, see N. Kadaswamy Pillai's *History of Siddha Medicine,* published by Tamil Nadu, India, in 1979, pp. 609–625. See also J. Da Coreglia's "Julius Evola al chimista" (Julius Evola as Alchemist) in *Arthos,* VI–VII, 16 (November 1977–March 1978), pp. 48–51. This passage also sheds light on the relationship between Evola and the Kremmerzians and certain sources of *The Hermetic Tradition.*

51. See the collection of Evola's writings entitled *Meditazioni delle vette* (Meditations on the Peaks, third edition, 1986; English edition Rochester, Vt.: Inner Traditions, 1998), which comprises experiences and doctrinal writings spanning a period between the 1920s and the 1940s.

52. He contributed to *La Torre* and to "Diorama Filosofico." He conceded an interview and profile to *Arthos,* XIV, 29, pp. 158–162, which was published in 1985. A more recent interview appeared in *Heliodromos,* n.s., 4, in the winter of 1988; see pp. 5–14.

in later publishing activities promoted by Evola[52] and more recently gave ample testimony to the friendly relationship he maintained with him.[53]

Corallo Reginelli, born in 1905 or 1906 and deceased sometime after 1996, lived in Merano for about twenty years; he signed himself "Taurulus" in the *Experiences* recounted in the third volume.[54] He wrote very little, but engaged in an intense exchange of letters right up to his death.

Emilio Servadio (1904–1995) has little need of introduction, as he is certainly the person most well known to the Italian public, being the founder of the Italian Psychoanalytical Society (1932), a writer, poet, and the forerunner of parapsychological research. His participation in the UR Group is a subject of controversy, since at first he denied any involvement with it,[55] while very recently he quite emphatically affirmed it.[56]

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53. Recommended works by Rudatis are the splendid volume *Liberazione. Avventuri e misteri nelle montagne incantate* (Liberation: Adventures and Mysteries in the Enchanted Mountains), published by Belluno in 1985 (in which we find the summation of his experiences and esoteric intuitions) and his articles in the revived *Annuari del C.A.A.I.* from 1981 until his death. Rudatis's writings are also reproduced in the anthology *Il Regno Perduto. Appunti sul simbolismo tradizionale della Montagna* (The Lost Kingdom: Notes on the Traditional Symbolism of the Mountain), published in Padua in 1989, pp. 19–45.

54. It appears to have been Corallo Reginelli (see our sourcebook [note 14], the dedication inscribed to him from Evola) who consigned the manuscript of Guido De Giorgio's *La tradizione romana* (see note 36) to Evola for publication. Reginelli, who studied Anthroposophy for a while at the suggestion of Giovanni Colazza, signed only one article with his name: "Variazione sull'albero quale simbolo" (Variations on the Tree as Symbol), published in the "Diorama Filosofico" of *Il Regime Fascista* of May 2, 1934. Passages from his unsigned letters were published under the title "Comunicazioni" (Communications) in *Cittadella,* I, 1 (June–August 1984), on pp. X–XIII of the *Inserto.* Two of his articles appeared in *Vie della Tradizione* under the pseudonym "Zero": "Pensieri" (Thoughts, XIX, 74, April–June 1989, pp. 54–64) and "Conversazione con . . . pochi" (Conversation with . . . a Few, XIX, 76, October–December 1989, pp. 190–194), as well as other selected passages from a 1991 letter: "Lettera al Direttore" (Letter to the Editor, XXI, 88, October–December 1992, pp. 177–181).

55. In an interview with G. de Turris in *Abstracta,* II, June 1987, he writes: "I knew him [Evola] personally, and even without being—I say this very frankly—an active part of the UR Group, I saw him every once in a while."

56. "In 1927 I collaborated with him [Evola] on the monthly issues of *Ur,* the esoteric journal in which I published, among other things, a poem under a pseudonym: but I do not wish to say anything beyond this since I have no intention of revealing a secret. After that came the monthly issues of *Krur.*"—from an interview with P. Battista in *La Stampa* newspaper, in its book review section of February 5, 1994.

Contents and Topics

The first task the UR Group set for itself was to invest the word *magic* with a particular, active, and functional connotation (as opposed to the connotation of *knowledge* or *wisdom* attributed to it in antiquity) that was close to the concept delineated by Roger Bacon: *practical metaphysics.* Far removed from the abhorred "spiritualistic" practices that were so fashionable at the time, from vulgar spiritism, pseudo-humanitarian Theosophy, and any of the confused and inferior forms of occultism, the UR Group, apart from particular teachings that one or the other of the collaborators may have been most familiar with, intended to reconnect with the very sources of Traditional esoteric teaching, according to that principle of Kremmerz, for whom magic "in all its complexity is simply a series of demonstrable theorems and experiences with concrete effects; the magical truths, as abstract as they may be, owe their evident demonstration in concrete 'fulfillment,' just as abstract mathematical truths have mechanical applications."[57] According to Kremmerz, magic, "or Arcane Knowledge, is divided into two parts, the *Natural* and the *Divine.* The former studies all the phenomena due to the occult qualities of the human organism and the way to access and reproduce them within the limits of the organism engaged as a means. The latter is dedicated to preparing the spiritual ascension of the initiate, in such a way as to render possible a relationship between man and the superior natures invisible to the vulgar eye."[58] One must bear in mind, furthermore, that "the point at which the former ends and the latter begins is very difficult to determine . . . and it therefore very often happens that both *magical directions* [the Natural and the Divine] move forward in tandem."[59]

Let us examine more closely the processes engaged in by the UR Group, who, explicitly via both natural and divine magic, or "High Magic," hoped that they would be the *Introduction* leading to its seductive and arduous threshold.

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57 G. Kremmerz, "Elementi di Magia Naturale e Divina" (Elements of Natural and Divine Magic), in *La Scienza dei Magi* (The Science of the Magi), *Opera Omnia,* vol. I, Edizioni Mediterranee, Rome, 1974, p. 132.

58. *Ibidem,* p. 13.

59. *Ibid.*

The point of departure for modern man was the necessity to dissipate the fog of everyday reality, so as to open a way for himself to a new existential dimension. The new man must aspire toward a direct vision of reality, "as in a complete reawakening."[60]

From this aspiration, by means of an internal magical process, one must arrive at a "change of state," whose final point of arrival coincides with the alchemical *opus transformationis:* "self-transformation is the necessary preliminary to higher consciousness, which does not know 'problems' but only 'tasks' and 'accomplishments.' "[61]

The contents of the three volumes of *Introduction to Magic* can be subdivided into four well-defined categories: 1) "Esoteric doctrine and culture," consisting of the exposition of methods, disciplines, and techniques of actualization, with a particular deepening of symbology; 2) "Practice"—i.e, accounts of experiences actually lived through in person; 3) "Publication or translation of classic or rare esoteric texts" with appropriate comments and explanations; and 4) "Recognized doctrines placed in appropriate context," often incorporating critical or polemical footnotes.

Especially important in the first volume [the one translated here], regarding "Practice," are the contributions by "Luce" on the "*Opus Magicum*" (The Magical Work: Concentration, Silence, Fire, Perfumes) and by "Alba" on the magical sense of nature *(De Naturae Sensu);* regarding "Doctrine," the monograph written by "Abraxas" on "Knowledge of the Waters," a brilliant and evocative interpretation of a very famous esoteric symbol, and one by "Ea," "On the Magical Vision of Life," useful in that it synthesizes the significance of magical action for those who propose to become "alchemical heroes": "A great freedom, with action as the sole law."

Among the "Documents" published in this volume, notable for their importance are the translation from the Greek of the "Mithraic Ritual of the Great Magical Papyrus of Paris"—the only ritual of the Ancient Mysteries to have survived intact—with an excellent introduction and extremely ac-

60. Introduction to *Introduzione alla Magia,* vol. I, p. 8, from the 1971 edition.

61. *Ibid.,* p. 9.

curate commentary[62]; an original treatise from alchemical Hermeticism, *De Pharmaco Catholico,* in a synthesis by the same anonymous author, translated and annotated by "Tikaipôs"; and extracts from *De Mysteriis,* attributed to the Neoplatonic Iamblichus, the Buddhist *Majjhima-nikâjo,* and the Tibetan *Bde-MiChog-Tantra.*

In the second volume, regarding "Doctrine" we must note above all the two important studies by "Pietro Negri," on "The Western Tradition" (unfortunately never completed)[63] and on the "Secret Language of the 'Fedeli d'amore,'" reported on and discussed by the same Luigi Valli[64]; and the notable contributions by Evola on "Esotericism and Ethics," "Initiatic Consciousness Beyond the Grave," "On the Metaphysics of Pain and Illness"; as well as the monograph by "Arvo" on "The Hyperborean Tradition," subject to many interesting developments.[65] Among the anonymous writings regarding "Practice," the most compelling are "Teachings of the Chain," "The 'Double' and Solar Consciousness," and "Dissociation of the Mixtures."

Among the "Documents and Texts" in the second volume, we find the annotated translation of the *Turba Philosophorum* (The Crowd of the Philosopher), one of the most ancient and widely quoted Hermetic-alchemical texts; an important and annotated version from Kremmerzian contributor

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62. A new version of the *Ritual,* having as its base the work and commentary from *Ur,* was edited by A. Cepollaro and published by Atanòr in Rome, 1975.

63. This was to be continued in the second issue of the new series of *Ignis* (1929) but never came out. A section of the piece was integrated into the chapter dedicated to Saturn in my *Dèi e miti italici* (Italian Gods and Myths), second edition, published by ECIG, Genoa, in 1988. Other useful reading is P. Farsetti's "La sacralità dell'agricoltura nella 'Saturnia Tellus' " (The Sacred Nature of Agriculture in the "Saturn's Earth") in *Arthos,* IX–X, 22–24 (July 1980–December 1981), pp. 173–180.

64. Cf. L. Valli's *Il linguaggio segreto di Dante e dei "fedeli d'amore"* (The Secret Language of Dante and the "Fedeli d'amore"), in the Discussions and Adjunct Notes to vol. II, Rome, 1930, p. 104.

65. Cf. The special double issue of *Arthos* devoted to the same subject: *La tradizione artica* (The Arctic Tradition), XII–XIII, 27–28 (1983–1984) in which, among others, Evola's article of 1939 entitled "L'ipotesi iperborea" (The Hyperborean Hypothesis) is reproduced (pp. 4–11).

"Tikaipôs" of the *Golden Verses,* attributed to Pythagoras[66]; as well as three songs by the Tibetan ascetic Milarepa.[67]

In the third volume, which appears richer in source material than in practical doctrines, most notable are Evola's own writings on "Aristocracy and the Initiatic Ideal"[68] and "On the Symbolism of the Year," as well as those by "Arvo" on " 'Oracular' Arithmetic and the Background of Consciousness." Regarding "Practice," we find the "Experiences" of "Taurulus," the "Magic of Victory" by "Abraxas," and the important account of the Hindu alchemist Narayânaswami, of whom we have already spoken.[69]

Notable among "Documents and Texts" are passages from the *Clavis Philosophicae Chemisticae* (The Key to Chemical Philosophy) by Gherard Dorn and from the *Enneads* of Plotinus, astutely annotated by Evola, as well as selected passages from the works of Kremmerz and Crowley.

Interestingly, it was in *Ur* and *Krur* that a constructive critique was initiated of the specific works by René Guénon most open to analysis and discussion. One of these was *La crise du monde moderne* (The Crisis of the Modern World),[70] which Evola would later publish in an Italian edition in

66. After the war, Evola would work on a new presentation, with an introductory essay on Pythagorean thought, of the *Versi d'Oro pitagorei* (Golden Verses of Pythagoras), first published by Atanòr, Rome, in 1959, later reprinted in 1973 and 1981.

67. For more on Milarepa, see J. Evola's "A Mystic of the Tibetan Mountains" in *Meditations on the Peaks,* Rochester, Vt.: Inner Traditions, 1998, pp. 25–30.

68. Under its original title of 1929, "Significato dell'aristocrazia" (The Significance of the Aristocracy), it is now included in the Evolian collection *Monarchia, Aristocrazia, Tradizione* (Monarchy, Aristocracy, Tradition), published by R. Del Ponte, San Remo, in 1986, pp. 139–143.

69. Under the title *Alchimia indiana. La trasmutazione dell'uomo e dei metalli* (Indian Alchemy: The Transmutation of Man and Metals), published by A. P. Del Monte, with additional commentary and glossary, it was reissued as a separate, small volume by SeaR, Scandiano, in 1991.

70. Concerning Guénon, see "Ea," "Sul 'sapeinziale' e l'eroico, e sulla tradizione occidentale (3. La crisi del mondo moderno secondo René Guénon)" (On "Divine Wisdom" and the Heroic, and on Western Tradition (3. The Crisis of the Modern World According to René Guénon) in *Ur,* II, 11–12 (1928), pp. 331–337. This article, omitted from successive editions of *Introduction to Magic,* was reprinted as a booklet by itself in 1979 by Ursa Minor in Genoa. Our sourcebook (see note 14) includes Guénon's letter of December 18, 1928, to De Giorgio, in which he refers to this article.

1937 (second edition, 1953; third edition published by Edizioni Mediterranee in Rome, 1972); another was *Autorité spirituelle et pouvoir temporel* (Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power).[71] In the later editions of *Introduction to Magic,* Guénon's *Aperçus sur l'initiation* (Considerations on the Initiatic Way) was included.[72]

Despite their differences of position, Guénon definitely appreciated Evola's honesty and intellectual rigor; the two men engaged in an intense mutual correspondence beginning in 1927 and ending only with their deaths. Together they collaborated on the material for "Diorama Filosofico" (Philosophical Diorama), a special page carried by the daily *Il Regime Fascista* (The Fascist Regime, edited by Farinacci), contributing at least twenty-six collaborative articles between 1934 and 1940.[73]

More in-depth research would be well advised in order to shed a brighter light on the attempts by the inner circle of the UR Group to revitalize the esoteric roots and initiatic processes of the Roman Tradition.[74] Aside from the contributions by Reghini, by some of Steiner's followers, and by Evola

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71. Cf. "Ea," "Autorità spirituale e potere temporale" (Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power), in *Krur,* I, 9–11 (1929), pp. 333–343; then pp. 354–363 of the 1971 edition, third volume. Among the other documents is a letter from Guénon to De Giorgio, dated December 25, 1929, in which he expresses deep reservations of a doctrinal nature about Evola's position.

72. Cf. "Ea," "Sui limiti della 'regolarità' iniziatica" (On the Limitations of Initiatic "Regularity") in *Introduzione alla Magia,* vol. III, pp. 160–175 of the 1971 edition.

"Considerazioni sulla via iniziatica" (Considerations on the Initiatic Way), which deals primarily with the theme of initiatic legitimacy in Freemasonry, which Evola contested, was first published in French in 1946, then in Italian in 1949 (by Bocca in Milan); there have been several recent reissues. For more on this theme, cf. also J. Evola's *Scritti sulla massoneria* (Writings on Masonry), edited by R. Del Ponte and published by Settimo Sigillo, Rome, in 1984. The introductory segment is of special interest.

73. Guénon's articles in the "Diorama" have now been collected in a small volume called *Precisazioni necessarie* (Necessary Precisions), published by Il Cavallo Alato, Padua, in 1988. We hope to present in translation as soon as possible an edition by SeaR of most of Guénon's letters to Evola: a total of eleven letters between 1930–1949.

74. For instance, G. A. Colonna di Cesarò, on whom see R. Del Ponte's "Un occultista 'romano' della prima metà del Novecento: il duca Giovanni A. Colonna di Cesarò" (A

himself (most notably his piece "Sul 'sacro' nella tradizione romana" [On the "Sacred" in the Roman Tradition], published in the third volume), there is an interesting and enigmatic account in the last chapter of the third volume entitled "La 'Grande Orma': la scena e le quinte" (The "Great Trail": The Stage and the Wings), signed by a mysterious "Ekatlos."[75] In it the author strives to point out the traces of a long-perpetuated, ancient initiatic chain in the very bosom of the land around Rome, and its attempt, however futile, to exert a rectifying influence within the sphere of the Fascist movement during the first years in which it took power.[76]

In regard to this, Evola himself wrote that the aim of the "chain" of the UR Group, aside from "awakening a higher force that might serve to help the singular work of every individual," was also to act "on the type of psychic body that begged for creation, and by evocation to connect it with a genuine influence from above," so that "one may perhaps have the possibility of working behind the scenes in order to ultimately exert an effect on the prevailing forces in the general environment."[77]

Although this attempt did not meet with its hoped-for success, the monographs in the *Introduction to Magic* provide invaluable material for those individuals who, even today, might combine intention and capability in order to repeat the experiences of UR and, if possible, surpass its

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"Roman" Occultist of the First Half of the 1900s: Duke Giovanni A. Colonna di Cesarò), in *Cittadella*, IX, 38 (October–December, 1993), pp. 3–9. Steiner expressed his view of the Roman world like this: ". . . passing from the the Greek to the Roman culture, we see the great Roman types as if they were divine Greek figures descended from their pedestals and walking around in their togas!" (*The Gospel of John*, lecture X)

75. "Ekatlos," according to widespread rumor, was the representative of a very ancient patrician Roman family, the custodian of certain secrets and, perhaps, of certain sacred objects linked to the Roman Tradition. According to some, he may also have had a relationship—even one of superiority—with G. Kremmerz, collaborating with him on the journal *Commentarium* (1910) under the pseudonym of "Ottaviano." Cf. R. Del Ponte's *Il movimento tradizionalista romano nel Novecento* (The Traditionalist Roman Movement in the 1900s), published by SeaR, Scandiano, in 1987, pp. 32–34 and appendix I (pp. 55–56 and 65).

76. All this is described in much greater detail in the work cited above.

77. J. Evola, *Il cammino del cinabro*, p. 88.

results on a practical and actualized level.[78] However, there is always the great hidden danger in groups or cliques of this kind that uncontrolled or uncontrollable forces may gain the upper hand, when the corresponding ability is weak or is lacking to contain and transform the inherent subtle forces in all of us into *positive power.* If this was not the case in the UR Group—which, however, was able only to partially achieve what it had hoped to accomplish—it is all the less likely in contemporary times, when we have witnessed the eager tendency to improvise and re-create groups or communities whose intention, at least, was to further the mission of UR, and yet which gave rise to negative outcomes and uncontrolled negative forces, as has happened at least twice in Italy in the past thirty years.[79]

In conclusion, we would emphasize that the treatises found in *Introduction to Magic* are definitely not designed for the general public, but for a few qualified people who already grasp a precise sense of the notions put forth by the UR Group. Certainly these few, to conclude with the words of Kremmerz, "will find new and fertile nourishment for the spirit wearied by empty philosophies and even emptier conventionalities . . . just as they will find that serene and loyal clarity, the unquestionable sign of all true knowledge, which will give them a firm and stable orientation."

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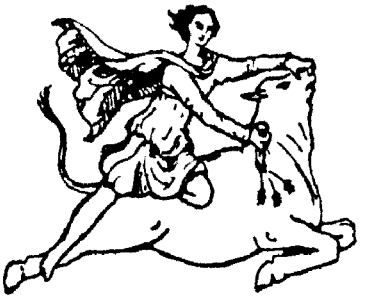
78. See the interesting essay by P. Cardinale, "Il Training autogeno di J. Schultz e le tecniche psico-fisiologiche del Gruppo di Ur. Un raffronto e alcune considerazioni" (The Autogenic Training of J. Schultz and the Psycho-physiological Techniques of the UR Group: A Comparison and Some Considerations), in *Vie della Tradizione,* XIII (1983), pp. 114–136 and 168–187.

79. I am referring in particular to the so-called "Corpo di Pari" (Body of Peers), extant in Genoa in the 1960s, and to the "Gruppo di Dioscuri" (Group of the Dioscuri) in Rome. Judgments on these groups will of necessity vary (especially as there were distinctly diverse branches of both of them in different cities) but all in all, it cannot help but be negative. I was already writing about this many years ago, in *Europae Imperium,* II, 2, (September–October, 1972), pp. 3–5, in response to a letter sent in by a sympathizer of the "Group of the Dioscuri." More recently, L. Moretti, in his "La dinamica del respiro. Resoconto di un'esperienza" (The Dynamics of the Breath: Firsthand Account of an Experience), published in *Convivium,* IV, 14 (July–September, 1993), pp. 4–15, has testified to some of the practices engaged in by the "Group of the Dioscuri." The same author, whose experience within the group lasted for four years, explicitly advises modern readers *not* to engage in such practices, whether "individually or collectively."



Introduction to Magic

Introduction

There are times in certain people's lives when they feel that all their certainties are wavering, all their lights dimming, all the voices of their passions and affection falling silent, including everything that enlivens and moves their being. Thus, being led back to his own center, the individual confronts the problem of all problems: *What am I?*

Then, in almost every case, he begins to see that everything he does, not only in his ordinary life but also in the domain of higher values, only acts as a *distraction,* creating the illusion of a "purpose" and a "reason," or something that allows him not to think deeply and to go on living. Daily routines, moral codes, faiths and philosophies, intoxication of the senses, and even disciplines appear to have been created or pursued by people in order to hide from their inner darkness, to escape the anguish of the vast fundamental solititude and to elude the problem of the Self.

In some cases, such a crisis can have a fatal outcome. In other cases, one reacts and shakes it off. The impulse of an animal energy that does not want to die reasserts itself, inhibits that which has been briefly intuited through such experiences, and makes one believe that it was just a nightmare, a momentary weakness of the mind, or a nervous imbalance. Then, new adjustments are made in order to return to "reality."

Then there are the evaders. Being unable to grasp it as a whole, they turn the existential problem into a mere "philosophical problem." And the game resumes. A new "truth" and a new "system" arise; they claim to see the light shining in the darkness, thus refueling the will to go on. Another equivalent solution is the passive reliance on traditional structures and on dogmatic and stereotypical forms of authority.

However, there are those who can hold their ground. Something new and irrevocable has occurred in their lives. They are determined to break out of the circle that has trapped them. They abandon all faiths and renounce all hopes. They intend to dissipate the fog and to blaze a trail. What they seek is self-knowledge, and the knowledge of Being within themselves. For them, there is no turning back.

This is one of the ways in which, especially in the modern age, some people may approach the disciplines usually referred to as *initiatic*. Others are brought to the same point by a kind of recollection and natural dignity, causing the clear sensation that this world is not the true world, that there is something higher than this perception of the senses and that which is merely human in origin. Such people yearn for the direct vision of reality *as if in a complete awakening.*

In both cases, a person realizes that he is not alone. He will feel close to *others* who have arrived at this point by another path, or who maybe have always been there. Then, they will learn their truth:

Beyond the reasoning intellect, beyond beliefs and what passes today for science and culture, there is a higher knowledge. There the anguish of the individual ceases, the darkness and the contingency of the human condition dissolve, and the problem of Being is resolved. This knowledge is transcendent also in the sense that it presupposes *a change of state.* It can be achieved only by transforming one's way of being into a new one, changing one's consciousness. Just as it is absurd for a person holding a burning coal to expect that the pain will cease before he drops the coal, likewise it is absurd to think that one can open a path beyond the fundamental darkness of existence while the individual remains what he is. To transform oneself—this is the necessary premise of higher knowledge. Such knowledge does not know "problems" but only *tasks* and *realizations.*

Such realizations must be understood as something entirely *positive.* The necessary presupposition here is the ability to consider only the concrete, real, naked relationship with one's self and with the world. Especially in the case of modern man, this consists of the conditioned, extrinsic, and contingent relationship characteristic of the physical state of existence. As for the varieties of what has been called the "spirit," they are a mere counterpart of physical existence, such that all of their values (good and evil, true and false, superior and inferior) do not constitute a gap in relation to what the Self is, as a human being, in the hierarchy of beings. This is why a crisis or a radical upheaval is necessary. This is why it is necessary to have the courage to set *everything* aside, and to become detached from everything. The mutation of one's deepest structure is the only thing that matters for the purposes of higher knowledge. This knowledge, which is at the same time wisdom and power, is essentially nonhuman;

it can be achieved by following a way that presupposes the active and effective overcoming of the human condition.

Having long been trapped in a sort of magic circle, modern man knows almost nothing of such horizons. Moreover, as Joseph de Maistre correctly pointed out, those who are called "scientists" today have hatched a real conspiracy; they have made science their monopoly, and absolutely do not want anyone to know *more* than they do or in a *different* manner than they do.

However, this does not mean that this different and higher knowledge does not really *exist*. The teaching we are concerned with has a much better claim than the predominant religion in the West to say: *quod ubique, quod ab omnibus et quod semper* (that which is everywhere, from all things, and forever). This teaching corresponds to a unitary tradition that can be found variously expressed in the traditions of every people, sometimes expressed as the wisdom of ancient royal or priestly elites, sometimes as knowledge concealed in sacred symbols, myths, and rituals, whose origins are lost in primordial times; or as allegorical writings, mysteries, and initiations, or as theurgy, Yoga, or high magic; or, in more recent times, as the secret knowledge of underground currents that surface here and there in the course of Western history, up to the Hermeticists and the Rosicrucians.

This path also corresponds to a precise, rigorous, methodical *science,* transmitted from flame to flame, from initiate to initiate, in unbroken chains that are rarely evident to the profane. This science has nothing to do with external things and phenomena, but it focuses on the deepest energies of human interiority, and proceeds *experimentally,* with the same criteria of objectivity and impersonality as in the exact sciences. This science, just like modern scientific disciplines, basically predicts the same effects in the presence of the same conditions and the same operations, independent of feelings, morality, and abstract speculation.

This "divine" technique, traditional in the higher sense of the word, affords real possibilities to those who, after the previously mentioned crisis, find in themselves the strength and calmness to overcome it in a positive manner and to experience it as a catharsis and purification from everything that is merely human. Moreover, this science offers real possibilities to another category of beings, namely those few individuals in whom, in mysterious ways, an ancient legacy reemerges and grows again, almost like the instinct of *another race* that has disappeared in the course of the millennia.

INTRODUCTION

The human brain has already given all it had to offer. Now what matters is to make the whole body into an instrument of consciousness, which, by overcoming the limitation of the individual, must penetrate those vital layers where the dark and deep energies of a higher Self are at work, until the entrance of the path leading to the "closed palace of the King" is found again.

This collection of essays aims at presenting clues, suggestions, and techniques of this secret science, which, in its essence, is not transmitted in a body of beliefs and concepts, but rather becomes a light of inner awakening, shining from spirit to spirit. We have tried, as a general criterion, to avoid as much as possible any discussion *about* things, and to capture instead their essence, omitting nothing in order to be fully understood. Wherever obscurities remain, this is not by our wish but due to the nature of the subject matter itself. Higher knowledge is first and foremost *experience*. But everything that is experience is intelligible only through an analogous experience. Any written or printed communication will always meet a limit that can be removed only by one who can take up the position corresponding to the particular teaching.

We will limit our subject matter to:

1. Exposition of methods, disciplines, and techniques.

2. Reports of real, historical initiatic experiences.

3. Republication or translation of rare or little-known texts, or excerpts from both Eastern and Western traditions. When necessary, these will be clarified, annotated, and presented so as to awaken inner energies and to disclose new perspectives.

4. Recognized doctrines placed in appropriate context, intended to challenge the rigidified view of man, the world, and history that has prevailed since the advent of modern civilization.

The various essays in this book complement one another. Overall, they are arranged in such a way that all the elements necessary for an adequate comprehension of each one have already been given. To a large degree, the contributors have played the role of organic parts joined in one common task, by taking up, integrating, and developing in a new light what the others have said.

By following a practice found in ancient India and in Western medieval schools, among the Pythagoreans and the Hermetists, in the medieval initiatic guilds, among the Rosicrucians, in some monastic authors, and partly even in the Jesuits, we have adopted the principle of anonymity. We have chosen to do so because it is not the personality of the contributor that matters, since anything meaningful and valid he has to make is not his creation or discovery, but rather reflects a superindividual and objective teaching. The editors have tried as far as possible to prevent these essays from echoing the particular currents with which their various authors were more familiar, so that the expositions may focus on the "constants" that are found in every authentic initiatic discipline.

The largest concession we have made is the use of the word *magic* in the title. Rather than referring to what that word meant in antiquity, in this context "magic" assumes a metaphorical sense, characterizing only a particularly active assumption of traditional and initiatic disciplines that is more or less shared by the whole group of contributors.

The contributors also share in their opposition to the varieties of what today goes by the name "spiritualism," ranging from vulgar séances to Anglo-Indian Theosophy, "occultism," Anthroposophy, and other similar trends. We regard them all as deviations, having nothing to do with authentic traditional initiatic teaching; they are indeed a hybrid mixture of fragments of ancient truths, modern mental distortions, visionary currents, and second-rate philosophy dressed up with a moralistic and evolutionary-humanitarian sauce. The editors of this book have taken great care to convey to the reader a sense of detachment from these confused and counterfeit forms that mirror only the decadence and lack of principles in our times.

The reader of this work will not easily find elsewhere such a wealth of specialized teachings, presented with precision and clarity. He will have to decide how far to limit himself to a simple reading for information's sake, and how far, discovering a higher vocation previously only dimly sensed, he wants to dare, to work, and to be silent. According to an initiatic teaching, those who strive with an inner and fervent seriousness will rarely be left alone. It is possible that for some, this contact with UR will be only the first, to be followed by others at the proper time, in virtue of an inescapable law—those who, having left one shore behind and still struggling in the "waters," are already striving to reach the other shore.

I

Pietro Negri

Sub Specie Interioritatis

(From the Inner Point of View)

Coelum . . . nihil aliud est quam spiritualis interioritas.
(Heaven . . . is nothing other than spiritual inwardness.)
– Guibertus, *De Pignoribus Sanctorum*, IV, 8

Aquila volans per aerem et Bufo gradiens
per terram est Magisterium.
(The eagle flying in the air and the toad crawling
on the ground is the Magistery.)
– M. Maier, *Symbola Aureae Mensae duodecim Nationum*,
Frankfurt, 1617, p. 192

Many years have gone by since I first had an experience of *immateriality*. But despite the passing of time, the impression I derived from it was so vivid and powerful that it still lingers in my memory, as far as it is possible to transfuse and retain certain transcendent experiences there. I will attempt now to convey this impression *humanis verbis* (in human terms), evoking it again from the innermost recesses of my consciousness.

The sensation of immaterial reality suddenly flashed in my consciousness, without prior warning, apparent cause, or determining reason. One day about fourteen years ago I was standing on a sidewalk of the Strozzi Palace in Florence, talking with a friend. I do not remember what we were talking about, though it was probably about some esoteric topic: in any event, the topic of the conversation had no bearing on the experience I had. It was a day like many others, and I was in perfect physical and spiritual health. I was not tired, excited, or intoxicated, but free from worries and nagging thoughts. All of a sudden, as I was either talking or listening, I *felt* the world, all things, and life itself in a different way. I suddenly *became aware* of my incorporeity and of the radical, evident immateriality of the universe. I realized that my body *was in me*, and that all things were

inwardly within me; that everything led to *me,* namely to the deep, abysmal, and obscure center of my being. It was a sudden transfiguration; the sense of immaterial reality stirring in my field of awareness, and connecting with the usual sense of everyday, "dense" reality, allowed me to see everything in a new and different light. It was as when a sudden opening in a thick ceiling of clouds lets a ray of sun filter through, and the ground or the sea below is suddenly transfigured in a light and ephemeral brightness.

I perceived myself as a dimensionless and ineffably abstract point; I felt that inside this point the whole was contained, in an entirely nonspatial manner. It was a total reversal of the ordinary human sensation. Not only did the Self no longer have the impression of being contained, or localized in the body; not only did it acquire the perception of the incorporeity of its own body, but it felt the body within itself, feeling everything *sub specie interioritatis* (from the inner point of view). It is necessary to understand the terms I am using here: "within," "inner," "interior" are meant in a nongeometrical sense, simply as the best terms to convey the sense of the reversal of the position or relationship existing between body and consciousness. But then again, to speak of consciousness contained in the body is just as absurd and improper as to speak of the body contained in consciousness, considering the heterogeneity of the two terms.

It was a powerful, sweeping, overwhelming, positive, and original impression. It emerged spontaneously, without transition or warning, *like a thief in the night,* sneaking in and grafting itself on the usual commonplace way of perceiving reality. It surfaced very quickly, asserting itself and then remaining in a clear fashion, thus allowing me to live it intensely and to be sure of it; then it vanished, leaving me dumbfounded. "What I heard was a note of the eternal poem," wrote Dante; and in evoking it again, I still feel its sacred solemnity, its calm and silent power, and its stellar purity floating in my inmost awareness.

This was my first experience of immateriality.

I have tried to describe my impression as accurately as possible, even at the cost of being criticized for not having obeyed the norms of a precise philosophical terminology. I will readily admit that my philosophical

competence was not, and still is not, equal to these spiritual experiences, and also that, from the point of view of philosophical studies, it would probably be better if only those who have great philosophical merits could be told of such experiences. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that the point of view of philosophical studies is not the only admissible one, and that *"the spirit bloweth where it listeth"* (John 3:7) without regard for anyone's philosophical competence.

In the specific case of my personal experience, the shift occurred independently from any scientific or philosophical speculation and from any cerebral activity. I am rather inclined to think that this independence was not fortuitous and exceptional. In truth, it seems that rational speculation may lead no further than a mere conceptual abstraction of a fairly negative character, and is thus incapable of suggesting or provoking the direct *experience* or the *perception* of immateriality.

The usual way of living is based on the sense of material reality, or, if one prefers, on the material sense of reality. What exists is what resists, the compact, massive, and impenetrable; things *are* insofar as they exist and occupy space, outside and even inside our bodies; it is as though the more impenetrable and impregnable they are, the more real they are. The empirical and ordinary concept of matter, as a *res* (thing) in itself occupying space, tangible and offering resistance, is a function of bodily life. The necessities of a life lived in a solid, dense, heavy body, accustomed to rest on solid and stable ground, generate the habit of identifying the sense of reality with this particular human way of perceiving reality, and generate the conviction *a priori* that this is indeed the only possible way and that there neither are nor can be others.

However, these typical traits of material reality become increasingly tenuous and eventually disappear when a shift occurs from solid matter to liquid, fluid, and gaseous matter. Thus scientific analysis leads, through the successive stages of molecular and atomic disintegration, to a view of matter that is very far from the primitive, empirical concept that first appeared to be a most certain and immediate datum of experience. Moving from science to philosophy, the universal dematerialization of physical bodies necessarily corresponds to the idealistic conceptual abstraction and to the resolution of the whole in the Self. However, the conceptual acknowledgment of universal spirituality does not lead to the conquest or to

the effective acquisition of the *perception* of spiritual reality. It is possible to follow an idealistic philosophy while remaining as spiritually blind as the grossest materialist. It is possible to claim to be an idealist philosopher and to believe oneself to have reached the peak of idealism merely through a laborious conceptual conquest, all the while excluding or not thinking at all about the possibility of a perception *ex imo* (from below). Again, it is possible to mistake every spiritual epiphany with a mere act of thought—and even to believe it necessary to do so.

Naturally, with such notions in one's head, one could be clambering up the trees of absolute idealism without any other consequence than breaking a few branches on the heads of one's fellow climbers. We really should not look so disdainfully at the positivist philosophers of the past, since they were the poor but honest victims of a simplistic acceptance of the empirical criterion of material reality! To deprive this materialistic and empirical sense of reality of its character of uniqueness, positivity, and irreplaceability does not rob it of all value, but rather defines its value. It continues to have a right of citizenship in the universe, beside and together with other ways of experiencing reality.

Having attained idealistic conceptual abstraction is no cause for singing hymns of victory too soon. Nor does the existence and the discovery of immaterial reality require us to turn the tables, bestowing on the new sense of reality the privileges of the old one, exalting the former at the latter's expense. The truth of one of them does not imply the falsity of the other: the existence of one does not exclude coexistence with the other. It is illusory and arbitrary to believe that there is and must be only one way to experience reality; if in the last analysis the empirical criterion of material reality is fatally reduced to a mere illusion, this modality of consciousness based on an illusion nevertheless *really exists;* so much so, that this sense is the foundation of the lives of countless beings, even when this criterion is conceptually or spiritually overcome, engulfed by the new sense of immateriality.

My experience, no matter how fleeting, gave me the practical demonstration of the possible, effective, and simultaneous coexistence of the two perceptions of reality, namely the pure spiritual perception and the ordinary and bodily perception, as contradictory as they may be to the eyes of reason. It is an elementary experience that is certainly no occasion for pride; however, it is a fundamental experience similar to the one Arjuna had in

the *Bhagavad Gita* and to the one Tat had in *Pymander;* it is a first, effective, and direct perception of what the Kabbalists called the *holy palace within;* of what Philalethes called *"the hidden palace of the King";* and of what St. Theresa of Avila called *"the interior castle."* As elementary as it may be, it is an experience that initiates a person to a new and double life; the hermetic dragon puts on wings and becomes airborne, able to live on the earth or to fly away from it.

Why is it, though, that we are usually deaf to this perception and that I myself was not aware of it before? Why did it fade away? What purpose does it serve? Is it not better not even to suspect the existence of such disturbing mysteries? And why is one not taught how to obtain this sensation? Is it right that only a few should partake of it, and others not?

It is not easy to give exhaustive answers to these and other relevant questions. As for spiritual deafness, it seems to me that it comes from or depends on the fact that usually our conscious attention is so much focused on the sense of material reality that every other sensation goes unnoticed. Thus it is a matter of listening: the melodic theme played by the violins usually commands all one's attention, while that of the cellos and basses goes unnoticed. Maybe it is also the monotony of this deep and low note that hides it from ordinary perception. I clearly remember the astonishing feeling I experienced one day in the mountains, when, standing in the middle of a vast field of flowers, all of a sudden the dull and monotonous buzzing sound produced by countless insects struck my ear. Only by chance, or rather all at once and without apparent reason, I became aware of the buzzing that certainly existed prior to my sudden perception.

The answer, as one can see, can be found only in a comparison with similar phenomena, and it will probably not satisfy the reader. Thus I am afraid that I will not be able to give more satisfactory answers to other questions. Therefore I shall end this essay, in obedience to the limits of time if not to discretion.

Leo

Barriers

The first initiative of a man seeking the Way must be to reject the habitual image that he has of himself. He will be able to begin to say "I" only when the magical word corresponds to the inner imagination of self-awareness unconstrained by limitations of space, time, or power.

Human beings must retrieve the sense of the reality of themselves. At present, they only limit and diminish themselves, feeling different and smaller than they really are; every thought they conceive and every deed they perform adds one more bar to their prison cell, one more veil to their vision, one more denial of their power. They lock themselves inside the limits of their bodies and attach themselves to the earth that carries them: it is as if an eagle fancied to be a snake and crawled on the ground, ignoring its wings.

It is not only that man ignores, deforms, and denies himself, but that he also reenacts the myth of Medusa, turning everything around him into stone. He observes and sizes nature with weights and measures. He limits the life surrounding him to petty laws, and overcomes the mysteries with petty hypotheses. He freezes the universe into a static unity, and puts himself at the periphery of the world, shyly, humbly, as if he were an accidental secretion, without power or hope.

Man is the center of the universe. All of the cold or incandescent material masses of the myriad worlds out there do not weigh on the scale of values as much as the simplest change in his consciousness. The limits of his body are just an illusion; man does not merely rest on the earth, but he continues through the earth and into cosmic space. Whether he moves his thought or his arms, an entire world moves with him; thousands of mysterious forces hasten toward him in a creative gesture, and all of his daily actions are just the caricature of what really flows divinely toward him.

14
BARRIERS

Thus he should look around himself and free everything that surrounds him from its petrification. Before knowing it, he must imagine that there are conscious energies in the earth, in the waters, in the air, and in fire, and that the so-called natural forces are just modalities of our own substance projected outward. It is not the earth that makes the plant live, but the forces in the plant that draw from the earth the elements necessary for its own life. Something else needs to be grafted onto the sense of the beauty of things, namely the sense of the mystery of things as an obscure and yet intuited reality. Not only must what we can see and know act in us, but the unknown must also be bravely affirmed and felt in all its power.

We must emphasize the need for a special attitude to this point of view, as to any other esoteric one. What matters is to inaugurate something that will often help along the way of spiritual development, namely a way of possessing a concept that amounts to more than merely understanding or remembering it. It is necessary to *establish a rhythm:* in other words, to present a concept periodically and rhythmically[1] to one's consciousness, which then grasps it willingly, and not only as a thought but also as a feeling. The contemplation of one's being and of the world in the manner that I have described generates a sense of greatness and power. We must retain this sense within us, in order to be intensely penetrated by it.

In this way we will be able to establish a relationship of realization with this new vision, which at first will flow into the subconscious, then after some time will be incorporated increasingly into the feeling, in the manner I have described. A new condition will then arise: what was first a mere concept will eventually become the *presence of a force,* and a state of liberation will be reached, on which the new life may be built.

All the exercises of inner development will be paralyzed unless one breaks the shell of limitation that daily life forms around one, and that still remains in the human subconscious even after a change of perspectives.

1.This fundamental point, namely to introduce knowledge into one's body by means of a certain rhythm until it is totally transfused, may explain why there are so many conceptually useless repetitions in Buddha's sermons, as also in magical prayers and invocations, and in the rational employment of breathing techniques in Hatha Yoga. (Note by UR)

Abraxas

Knowledge of the Waters

The life of all beings, without exception, is ruled by a primordial Force deep inside them. The nature of this force is *craving:* an appetite that is never satisfied, an endless restlessness, an irresistible need, and a blind, wild yearning.

The essence of this primordial cosmic nature is: becoming; chaotic and disorderly transformation; an incoercible flux; generation-destruction; attraction-repulsion; terror-desire; formation-dissolution. All of these elements are combined in a fiery mixture that knows no rest.

The Wise spoke of it as a wonder and as a terror. They called it: Universal and Living Fire, ὑλη (matter), Green Dragon, Quintessence, First Substance, Great Magical Agent. The principle of the universal work is also the principle of their "GREAT WORK," since the Magistery of Creation and the Magistery with which man realizes himself according to the royal Art are one and the same.

This Matter of ours is neither an abstraction of profane philosophy nor a myth or a fairy tale, but a living and powerful reality, the spirit and the vitality of the Earth and of Life.

The human race does not *know* it. A providential natural law keeps it hidden from their consciousness through the illusory spectacle of material phenomena, of solid reality, without which there would be no rest or peace in their lives. According to the same providential law, this veil of ignorance is removed and the eye of Knowledge is opened only at a certain point of growth and in the presence of a strength able to endure the vision.

Know, therefore, that the Life of your life is in It.

Look out for It.

It reveals itself, for example, at all times of sudden danger.

It may be a speeding car rushing toward you, when you walk absentmindedly; or the opening of a yawning crevice in the earth under your

feet; a flameless burning coal, or an electrified object that you have touched inadvertently. Then in reaction, something violent and extremely fast happens. Is it your "will," your "consciousness," your "Self"? No. Your will, consciousness, and Self usually come into play only later on. At the time they were absent and left behind. Something deeper, faster, more absolute than everything that you are has suddenly manifested, taken charge, and asserted itself.

When you experience hunger, terror, sensual thirst, panic, and spasm—there you will encounter this thing again, as something violent, dark, and untamed. And if such intimations allow you to feel it, you will gradually be able to experience it as the invisible background of your whole waking life.

The deep roots of inclinations, faiths, atavisms, invincible and irrational convictions; habits, character, everything that lives in you as animal instinct or as biological legacy; all the body's will; the blind thirst for life, yearning to generate, to preserve, and to continue itself—all this reconnects and merges into the same principle. In relation to it, you usually have the same freedom of a chained dog: you may not feel the chain, and think you are free until you try to go beyond a certain limit. But when you do that, the chain tautens and stops you. Otherwise, it deceives you: you move in a circle, without realizing it.

Do not deceive yourself: even the "highest things" obey this "god." Watch out: the more they appear independent and freed, the more intimately and strictly they obey it, obedient to its intoxicating magic. As long as its deepest yearning is affirmed, this force does not care for this form or that, or for the various "reasons" with which you believe you can justify yourself. Being disguised, it reasserts its bond over you. Look out for this force too, and come to know it through the wild power of imagination and suggestion. Again, it is a speed that freezes and chains you; when it asserts itself, you can do nothing. The more you "want" to oppose it, the more you will feed it at your expense.

It is like fear: the more you try to drive it out, the stronger it grows. It is like the sleep that evades you the harder you "try" to fall asleep. It is like a plank over the abyss: it is the suggestion of falling, and you will certainly fall if you force yourself to cross, "willing" to overcome it.

It is like the flame of passion that rises sharper, the more your "con-

science" tries to stifle it; it disappears only by entering inside and utterly poisoning you.

Here again, it is this force that erupts. Be aware that this Being that merges with the emotional and irrational powers travels deeper within you, until it identifies itself with the same force in charge of the deep functions of the physical life. What can "will," "thought," "Self" do against these functions? They are external to it: like parasites, they live off it, drawing essential fluids from it, though they are unable to descend all the way to its deep trunk.

Dig, without fear, with a sharp tool. Ask yourself: "What elements of my body can I justify with *my* will? Do I *will* my own breathing, or the inner combustion through which food is digested? Do I want my own form, my own flesh, this particular man, who lives in this fashion, happy or unhappy, noble or vulgar?" But since I ask these questions, should I not press further on? Do I really will "my" will, "my" conscience, "my" Self, or *are* they just there? That which I claim is caused by my will, I should also be able not to will it, and thus I should be able to live without it. As far as "my" empirical Self is concerned, do I own it or *does it own me?*

Reader, since you have approached the "Science of the Magi," you must be strong enough for this truth: *you are not the life in you.* You do not exist. There is nothing you can call "mine." You do not own Life: it is Life that owns you. You endure it. It is a pure illusion to believe that this phantasm of a "Self" is able to live forever, following the decay of the body. Can't you see that the relation with this body is essential to your "Self," and that any illness, trauma, or accident has a precise influence on all of its faculties, no matter how "spiritual" and "superior" they may be?

And now, detach yourself from your own self and cross the threshold, as you feel the rhythmic sensation of analogy, deeper and deeper into the dark recesses of the force that sustains your body.

Here it loses name and individuation. The sensation of this force will expand to encompass the notions of "me" and "not-me," pervading all of nature, substantiating time, carrying myriads of beings along as if they were drunk or hypnotized, reaffirming itself in a thousand forms, irresistible, wild, limitless, burning with an eternal insufficiency and privation.

Think to yourself: "This is." If this knowledge leads you back to yourself, and, as you experience a sense of deadly cold, you feel an abyss yawning

beneath you: "I exist in this"—then you have achieved the KNOWLEDGE OF THE "WATERS."[2]

In our Tradition, these "waters," or *Humidum Radicale* ("radical Humidity"), have been symbolized as ▽ (downward direction, precipitation). They have also been referred to as the "earthly Venus," as female and cosmic matrix (▽ in Hinduism is the symbol of Shakti and of the yoni), or as "Original Snake" (because of the serpentine path ≈, which is the astrological equivalent of ▽). It is the elementary demiurgic power, God's "Magic," the primordial substance that was precipitated when God said "Let there be Light!"

Later on you will learn to recognize it as Light: an elementary light that carries the "Signatures" of all things like whirlwind-natures. It is undifferentiated, being idea, substance, and motion, both physical and psychic; it is indifferent toward good and evil and to every form, in its plastic capacity to be transformed into all things. It is a blind yearning; in it, idea and reality are instantaneously and "magically" one and the same, just as in that reflection of it, that "path" leading to it, which is the power of imagination in man.

Since everything is at the mercy of this force and exists through this force, know that he who learns to master it completely will be able to dominate through all of nature: fire, earth, air, and water, life and death, the powers of heaven and hell, because this force encompasses them all.

And now, since you wished to learn about it, realize that the "Science of the Magi" *wills this* and disdains anything that is not *this*.

To create something stable, impassive, immortal, something rescued from the "Waters" that is now living and breathing outside of them, finally free; and then, like a strong man who grasps a raging bull by the horns, slowly but relentlessly subjugating it, to dominate this cosmic nature in oneself—this is the secret of our Art, the Art of the Sun and of Power, of

2. In Buddhism, this "knowledge of the Waters" corresponds to the realization of so-called "samsâric consciousness" and of the truth of *anattâ* (no-soul). Beyond the awareness of the unique life of a given individual, there is the awareness of the trunk, of which this life is only a branch: the primordial force of this trunk is experienced. Moreover, what is also experienced is the unreality of the "Self" and of everything that resembles the "Self" (this is the doctrine of *anattâ*). To feel *samsâra* and to feel oneself in *samsâra* is the presupposition, also in Buddhism, for the realization of that which is truly spiritual and transcendent. (Note by UR)

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the "Mighty Strength of all Strengths." The high sciences of the Kabbalah and Magic promise an immortal nature and a regal power to man: thus, they must be regarded as vain and deceitful if they do not deliver (E. Levi).

Stop your petty mind: if you think that this is folly or the proud dream originating from a shallow pride, be assured that it is fear thinking in you. You do not need to believe: on the contrary, *you must not believe.* Try. Dare.

The "Matter of the Great Work" is here, inside your craving, in your deepest will, closer to you than you are to yourself. Arouse it, excite it. Resist it. Then, you will experience in yourself its wild power, in proportion to how far you can go beyond your daring. And if you can conceive an *even greater strength,* what can you still conceive that can resist it or would not be bent or broken by it?

You have now known the possibility of the Work, whether or not you are equal to to it.

Look.

This shore is the one plagued by misery, darkness, and pollution. Before you is the mighty current. There lies the other shore.

On this side are ignorant people, lacking Knowledge, pale, passive, intoxicated, whose lives are still outside and on this side of the Waters. On the other shore you will find virile men, heroic souls, awakened to disgust, to revolt, to the Great Awakening; having left one shore behind, they dare face the current and the undertow, being led by their ever more firm, unshakable will. Once there, they are known as "Survivors of the Waters," "Walkers on the Waters," the "Holy Race of the Free," "The Conquerors," "The Lords of Life and Salvation," "The Radiant Ones." They are the "Dragon Slayers," the "Dominators of the Bull," "Consecrated to the Sun," those who have been transformed through Ammon's power and Wisdom.

These people can bind and freeze the Waters. Having been conquered by them, the Waters are now a magical force that obeys them. The Sun rises over the Waters and controls them with its reflection. Desire, the unleashed centerless lunar force (☾ = Moon, the symbol of *Materia prima* or of *Humidum Radicale*, the radical Humidity) finds here a center (☉ = symbol of the Sun).

The positive ascendance (△, symbol of UR, the initiatic Fire) that has asserted itself over the humid womb of the descendent ▽ balances it. This

conjunction is known as the symbol of Conquerors—*Solomon's seal,* which consists of two combined triangles ✡.

If you want to approach our Art, be aware that this is a painful struggle and somewhat like walking on a razor's edge. You may win or lose, and two things lead to certain disaster: to be afraid and to interrupt the operation. Once you have begun, you must go all the way, since an interruption leads to a dreadful reaction, with the opposite result. You can easily understand why: at every step you take, an increasingly higher quantity of swirling energy is arrested and pushed upstream; having been excited and provoked, it is filled with tension. As soon as you give up, it will come crashing down upon you and sweep you away.

Prepare yourself.

Fix your eyes on the goal and never lose sight of it.

Close your eyes. Create an image and look at it. In the dark, learn to discern a light that cannot be seen with physical eyes. This ethereal light carries the first secret of the Work.

Become insensitive to good and evil, upright, absolute, naked.

Learn to will without yearning, without fear or regrets.

Create a power to act without tiring. Let this power be cold, hard, and at the same time labile and flexible. The Secret of the Force consists in willing well, willing long, willing without ceasing—and in *never yearning.*

Cut yourself free from the bonds of sensuality, intoxication, and passion: reduce yourself to a *simplicity* that *wills.*

Violate every need. Use everything and abstain from everything as you please. Become the absolute ruler of your soul.

Create a resistance. What is mobile obeys what is immobile, and the powers of nature become subjected to him who can resist them. Having reached a point when you desire nothing and fear nothing, there will be few things over which you will not rule. However, enjoy nothing until you have first vanquished it within yourself.

The Force does not give itself up. Take it. Dare.

Being free, well balanced, strong, calm, and pure, and having slain desire, say: "I WANT."

This is the first teaching. The door has been opened to you. THE FORCE IS IN YOU.

Luce

Opus Magicum

Concentration and Silence

The possibility of achieving a complete theurgical and magical realization is based on the operator's direct and empirical knowledge of the spiritual powers that constitute the intimate essence of reality; this knowledge is attained by performing a *ritual* that helps to awaken one's faculties, whether unknown or neglected.

He who, after choosing a path to follow, steels himself and is certain that his will shall endure when facing the many obstacles on the way, and when no moment of weakness shall deter him from his appointed path, he is fit to begin the ritual.

In order to further clarify what is said about sacred operations, I will supply some brief references from magical and hermetic texts that may reveal many meanings, thus explaining the exact way in which the ritual operations should be performed.

We should first say something about the essence of human nature, which must be correctly *understood* in the multiple variety of its external and apparent symbols and its verbal explanations.

Agrippa wrote: "There are four elements that constitute the grounds of all material things, Fire, Earth, Water, Air, of which all earthly things are compounded; not by fusion but by *transmutation* and reunion, and in which all things are resolved when they decay."[3] These elements foreshadow in the physical and apparent reality the particular experiences of the operating spirit, whether it is conscious or not; "for none of them is found in the pure state, but they are more or less mixed, and apt to be changed one into the other."[4] This work of transformation is performed by Fire (i.e., by the

3. Henry Cornelius Agrippa, *De Occulta Philosophia,* I, 3.

4. *Ibid.*

spirit) that acts on the Earth (i.e., matter) in order to actualize the perfect Magistery, or the attainment of the Stone of the Wise.

Let us remember: *"Aurum igitur aurificandi verum, unum, solum principium esto."*[5] (Gold is the one, true, and only principle of gold-making.) The principle of perfectibility, dignification, and sublimation of the spirit is in the spirit itself and it creates (or determines, if you prefer) within itself the conditions of the ascent. Do not think that this is an easy operation, especially in its initial, double phase. This phase teaches how to first isolate the spirit, making it unassailable from any external influence, until, having perfected this state, it eventually acquires a new self-consciousness with completely new ways of perceiving.

The need for an assiduous and tenacious perseverance has been symbolized by the alchemists with the expression "Iron of the Wise." This resolve is necessary in the operation before the composition of Mercury, which will later be made to act upon the metals that symbolize the earthly *affections*. These affections, being gradually sublimated to the ultimate perfection of cosmic powers (heavens and planets), from the state of initial impurity proper to them (when they are mixed in the earth with substances foreign to them), can eventually join the essence of the sovereign artifex, and even be identified with it in the perfection of the Work.

CONCENTRATION is the essential and the next most important faculty after the willful determination appropriate to the purpose. For those who are used to studying, it will be easy to concentrate, as they reconstruct the psychological process of attention that, in our case, is at first free from any object. In this as well as in every other phase, they observe the general principle of applying themselves for longer periods of time and with increasing intensity.

We should note here that concentration can be practiced in two ways: the first, which we may call "external," has a purely cerebral and mental character; the second is essentially an act of the spirit.

One begins by finding a quiet and silent place, trying to eliminate any external obstacle to concentration, and assumes the most comfortable and

5. Eirenaeus Philalethes, *Introitus apertus ad occlusum regis palatium*, ch. I.

fitting position, so that the body will experience the least discomfort and not exercise any muscular effort. Then, totally abandoning yourself, relax in a position of absolute rest. We recommend the use of an armchair with a high back and armrests capable of sustaining the full length of the forearms. One can even lie down, with the head at the same level as the body, facing eastward. In the case of several people practicing together, special guidelines must be observed.

The initial theme of concentration is to become free from the habitual way of thinking and to feel one's thought as something real, fixed, material, massive, *located* in the mind, in the brain, as something condensed and gathered in its proper seat. Thought should be imagined to acquire such a *density* and consistency as to be grasped, completely dominated, and maintained outside the body. In this act, what occurs is a gradual separation between the conscious spirit, which is purely aware of what it is doing, and the act itself, which is something performed *by* the spirit, outside of the spirit, on another plane of "density," endowed with another, different nature. The spirit, by concentrating, in the tension of determining and feeling thought in such a concrete way, gradually detaches itself from it as a conscious act.

For this purpose many devices can be employed, such as mirrors.[6] It is generally helpful to *place* one's thought at a certain distance away. The concentration of thought in the area between the eyes is the object of special practices aimed at specific purposes.

Another method of concentration, more perfect but also more difficult, consists in *not paying attention to one's thought,* abandoning it to itself, until, being deprived of the vitality that it derives from *attention,* it remains inert, no longer capable of disturbing the pure act of spiritual consciousness.

In this state is found *Silence.*

The double function, active and passive, of the spirit in this phase was aptly described by Philalethes: *"Est autem aurum nostrum duplex, quod ad opus nostrum expetimus, maturum puta, fixum, Latonem flavum cuius cor sive*

6. The use of mirrors was discussed in issues 8–9 of *Ignis* (1925) in the context of a particular method of realization. We should, however, note that, in expounding ritual phases or real experiences, only what is most important was discussed; thus, countless details were purposely neglected.

centrum est ignis purus. Quare corpus suum in igne defendit, in quo depurationem recipit, ut nihil eius tyrannidi cedat, *aut ab eo patitur. Hoc in opere nostro vices maris gerit, quare auro nostro albo crudiori, spermati foemineo, conjungitur, etc."*[7] (Our gold that we use for our work is double, namely a ripe, fixed, yellow Latona whose heart or center is pure *fire*. Hence it defends its body in the fire, in which it receives its purification, *such that it surrenders nothing to its tyranny,* nor does it suffer from it. This acts the part of the male in our work, by which it is joined to our white, cruder gold, as to the female seed, etc.)

The nature of the fire, as animating spirit (and not as a particular element to be experienced) was thus described by Agrippa: "Fire appears in all things, and through all things, and at the same time is nothing, for it illuminates all, yet remains hidden and invisible when it is by itself and unaccompanied by matter in which to manifest its proper action and thereby reveal itself. It is boundless, and invisible, *sufficient in itself for every action that is proper to it* . . . it comprehends the other elements while remaining incomprehensible, having no need for any of them, able to grow through its own virtue and to communicate its greatness to the things that receive it, etc."[8]

In Silence, the spirit, free from every bond, precipitated within itself, sees and knows itself. This happens through a succession of conscious perceptions that can be differentiated into three successive phases.

At first, one has a clear feeling of isolation and solitude, in which the spirit floats, just as an inconsistent and airy mass floats inside a light, luminous medium. Gradually, one has the feeling of being submerged, sinking, and descending into something that, instead of being more substantial, becomes increasingly tenuous; at the same time one experiences a sense of dilating, as if one's surroundings slowly dilate, expanding to the infinite recesses of space. This is the first perception of the infinite.

Deeper down, deeper still, the slightly luminous impression becomes feeble and eventually disappears. A thick darkness sets in and also, at the

7. Philalethes, I.

8. Agrippa I, 5. (Editor's note: Here, as elsewhere, the version given in the Italian text is followed, whether or not it accurately translates the original.)

same time, a vague and more defined awareness of the greater density of the dark region into which one is sinking. Then it seems that being, having become solid *black,* expands beyond its limits into the universe. This is the second perception of the infinite.

The consistency becomes denser, more massive, and darkness almost becomes total blackness, up to a total opacity: the spirit sinks even more. At a certain point it stops, and the solidity is absolute. All of a sudden, it seems as if the enormous stony mass disintegrates (an instantaneous impression), and after that, a new abyss opens up underneath, the mass dissolves and the spirit sinks. This is an absolute vertigo in the spirit, which is vanquished only by the awareness of the self as an intangible, indestructible, tenacious, and victorious reality. Beyond this, the impression of darkness is one of a loose darkness: air-darkness. The spirit still endures, focused, resolved to overcome the abysmal depths; it remains immobile. From the bottom, a new light shines forth, which, at first tenuous, becomes increasingly intense, until it is perceived in a watery consistency that melts and transforms the infinity of things into a milky ocean.

Having reached this point, the sense of the spirit's infinity and unconditional freedom is absolute, and there is no better state to be enjoyed. *Requiem adeptus es.* (You have attained rest.) But do not think that one must remain in this way in a state of absolute immobility, because, although the first prerequisite and the most difficult operation has been performed, what still lies ahead is the constructive phase of the ritual, which is just as important and which leads to the knowledge and to the experience of purely spiritual ways of communication. The ritual teaches one to perceive the essence of things in their immediate reality, beyond formal appearance, by inwardly realizing the Names of power and the Signatures of things. Thus, the spirit will be perfect not only in potency, but in action as well.

For a brief comparison with the alchemical tradition, we should note that in the texts, the above-mentioned phases of darkness are correlated to other symbols referring to the color black. Philalethes has beautifully described the above-mentioned phase in the seventh chapter of his *Introitus,* after exhaustively outlining all the properties of the active spirit and its determinations, its whence and wherefore. The reader who is particularly interested in this subject should refer to that text and try to understand the symbols *in the spirit.*

Ea

The Nature of Initiatic Knowledge

Those who approach our disciplines must first of all realize this basic point: that the problem and even meaning of knowledge appear in a way very different from the various domains of modern culture.

From an initiatic point of view, *to know* does not mean "to think," but *to be* the known object. Something is not really known until it is *realized,* or, in other words, until one's consciousness is transformed into it.

In these terms, knowledge is one and the same with *experience;* thus, the initiatic method is a purely experimental method. As far as certainty is concerned, what counts here is what one has learned through direct and individual experience. In ordinary life, every sensation, yearning, emotion, or direct perception (a pain, a desire, an intuition) has this character. To speak here of "true" and "false" is meaningless; what matters is the knowledge of the thing itself according to an absolute *"Is,"* or to an experienced *"Is"* that does not wait for intellectual recognition. In this type of knowledge, there are no degrees or approximations or probabilities; one either has it or hasn't it.

However, for the ordinary man such knowledge is restricted to the sensible order, which has a finite, contingent, and accidental character. That which he ordinarily regards as knowledge is something different; it is a system of concepts, relations, and hypotheses that no longer has a pragmatic but rather an abstract character. The immediate data of experience, namely that which is directly evident to one's consciousness, are usually regarded as mere "phenomena"; one tends to posit or assume the existence *behind* them of something to which one attributes the character of true and objective reality. For science, this "something" is matter, or the varied interplay of etheric vibrations; for the philosophers, it is the "noumenon" or the "thing in itself" or some other vague idea of theirs; for

religion, it is some sort of divine hypostasis. Generally speaking, this is the situation: a body of knowledge is organized—profane knowledge—that does not go beyond purely sensible experience and which has a certain degree of objectivity only through transcending everything that has the value of individual and living evidence, vision, and meaning realized by consciousness. What emerges is an antithesis: what is pure experience, due to its finite and phenomenal character, is not "knowledge," just as that which is regarded as "knowledge" is not experience.

The initiatic path goes beyond this antithesis, pointing to an essentially different direction in which the criterion of direct experience is never abandoned. While for ordinary people this experience is one and the same with sensible experience, the initiatic teaching claims the possibility of many forms of experience, of which the former is just one. Each of these forms corresponds to a given way of perceiving reality; they are susceptible to being transformed into one another and to arrange themselves in a hierarchical fashion, in levels of perception that have an increasingly higher degree of absoluteness. According to such perspectives, there is no "world of phenomena" and an "absolute" behind them; what is "phenomenal" is merely that which characterizes a certain degree of experience and a certain state of the Self, while what is "absolute" is that which is correlative to another degree of experience and to another state of the Self, which the former may generate through an appropriate transformation. As far as the measure of absoluteness is concerned, one may say approximately that it is determined by the degree of *active identification,* namely by the degree according to which the Self is implicated and unified in its experience, and according to which its object is transparent to it in terms of a *meaning.* In correspondence to these degrees, the hierarchy proceeds from "sign" to "sign," from "name" to "name," until it reaches a state of perfect, superrational, intellectual vision, of full actualization or realization of the object in the Self and the Self in the object. This is a state both of power and of absolute evidence in regard to what is known; once this state is reached, every rationalization and speculation appears superfluous and every discussion meaningless. There is an ancient saying according to which one did not join the ancient Mysteries in order "to learn," but rather in order to achieve a sacred state through a deep experience.[9]

9. Synesius, *Dion.*, 48.

As a consequence of this, the initiatic teaching considers more negatively than positively the tendency of the mind to wander in the interpretation and solution of this or that philosophical problem, to erect theories and to be interested in some or another view of profane science. All this is useless and leads nowhere. The real problem has only a *practical* and operative character. What are the means to obtain the transformation and integration of my experience? This is what one should be concerned about. This is why initiation in the West has been associated less with the concept of a cognitive process than with that of an Art *(Ars Regia)* or of a Work *(opus magnum* or *opus magicum),* or of a symbolic construction (the construction of the "Temple"), while in China the notions of the Absolute and of a *way* converge in one term, "Tao."

It is therefore evident that the more or less Theosophical spiritualism that today fills the heads of its devotees with all kinds of speculations and fantasies about cosmology and supersensible worlds and beings can only foster an attitude that is flawed from the start. Only the experiential and practical attitude of a restrained mind and a silent and secret action performed under the aegis of the golden Hermetic saying *"post laborem scientia"* (knowledge after work) is healthy and valid from an initiatic point of view. I daresay that this applies to everything else for which modern "educated" men claim superiority and the right to hold opinions on. Culture in the modern, profane sense does not constitute a necessary presupposition, nor a privileged condition for spiritual realization. Quite the contrary: a person who has remained outside the crossroads of culture, "psychology," and the various aesthetic and literary contaminations, but who displays an open mind, balance, and courage, is more qualified to receive a superior knowledge than any academic professor, writer, or "critical thinker" of our day and age. Therefore, those who *really* amount to something in the initiatic order can be recognized by their extreme reluctance to theorize and argue. If these people discern a sincere aspiration in you, they will tell you only this: "This is the problem, and these are the means: go ahead."

Another consequence of the initiatic concept of knowledge is the principle of *differentiation,* which is also in distinct contrast with the ideas that inform modern profane knowledge. In fact, the entire modern "culture" (with science at the forefront) is dominated by a democratic, leveling, and uniform tendency. This culture regards as an "acquisition" what is within

everyone's reach: thus, according to modern culture, a truth is such only when everyone can recognize it, provided they have reached a certain level of education or, at most, pursued some studies, which nevertheless leave them the same as they always were. This may be true in the case of something conceptual and abstract, to be put in someone's head like something into a sack. But when it comes to experience, and more specifically to an experience conditioned by an essential transformation of the substance of consciousness, precise limits must arise. The knowledge acquired in this way cannot possibly be within everyone's reach, nor can it be transmitted to everyone without thereby degrading and desecrating it. There are different sorts of knowledge, and their differentiation corresponds to that which initiation, in its various degrees, brings about in human nature. This knowledge cannot be truly understood or "realized" by any but those who are at the same level, or who have an equal degree in a hierarchy that is endowed with a rigorously objective and ontological character. Thus, even aside from those occult or Theosophical expositions that are mere divagations or fantasies, in regard to initiatic and effective esoteric knowledge, the uselessness of merely theoretical communication and propagation is again confirmed. To reduce initiatic knowledge to a "theory" is the worst thing one can do. Here more than ever it is *allusion* and *symbol* that serve to produce illuminations. But if, as a result, there is no *beginning of an inner movement,* even this has no value. The very character of initiatic knowledge demands differentiation. It is natural that those who regard ordinary existence and sensible experience as the beginning and end of everything lack any common ground with that which, in its essence, is *realization.* All this should be seen with perfect clarity, and also its natural consequence: either to give up or to recognize different criteria of truth and knowledge from those predominant in modern culture and thought. The way of initiation is one that establishes substantial differences among human beings and reaffirms the principle of *suum cuique* (to each his own) against the egalitarian and uniform view of knowledge: according to this principle, one's knowledge, truth, and freedom are proportional to what one is.

One objection worth addressing may come from someone used to operating among tangible things and "concrete" ideas, who may say that transcendent states of being and the experiences mentioned (even if they can be achieved, since they are enclosed in the "subjective" sphere) merely

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amount to mysticism; that the criterion of knowledge as experience and identification is more or less one of mere feeling, and therefore it does not produce any insight when explaining, understanding, or giving an account of external things and of what takes place in us. These objections will be analyzed in greater depth further on. At this point, it is enough to clarify two points.

First, when we talk initiatically about "identification," what we mean is always an *active* identification, not a confusing and merging with or sinking into something; it is not an infra-intellectual and emotive state, but a state of essential and superrational clarity. Here lies the difference between the mystical and the initiatic spheres; it is an essential difference, even though not immediately evident to those who, apart from things and abstract concepts, can see only a dark night in which, for them, all cats are black.

The second point concerns the very notion of "explaining," although if we pursued this issue, it would lead us too far. We should begin by turning the tables against the objection and asserting that none of the profane disciplines has ever, nor ever will, provide any *real* explanation whatsoever. Those who, in order to "explain," attempt to show that the contrary is inconceivable, must indicate how they can really "explain" something outside the abstract domain of mathematics and formal logic (in which "rational necessity" or the inconceivability of the contrary is reduced to mere coherence in regard to propositions previously agreed upon). We intend to refer to concrete reality. However, here, from a rational point of view, there is absolutely nothing that exists simply because its opposite is inconceivable *a priori*. There is nothing in regard to which, beside various pseudo-explanations, one could not ask: "Why thus and not otherwise?"

Ancient and traditional science, to which initiatic knowledge is related, has followed an essentially different path, namely the path of knowledge of the effects in their real causes, of the "facts" in the powers of which they are the manifestations, which is the equivalent of the *identification with the causes* in the terms of a "magical" state. Only such a state can lead to the absolute rationale of a phenomenon; only this state can "explain" it in an eminent sense, because in it that phenomenon is grasped, or even *seen,* in its real genesis.

The important consequence of this is that on the initiatic path the acquisition of knowledge parallels the acquisition of power, since the active

identification with a cause virtually confers a power over that same cause.[10] Modern men believe that this is the same in the case of their science, since through various techniques science brings about well-known material realizations; and yet they are grossly mistaken, since the power afforded by technology is no more a true power than the explanations of profane sciences are true explanations. The cause, in both cases, is the same; it is the fact of a man who remains a man, and who does not change his nature to any significant degree. This is why the possibilities afforded by technology have a "democratic" and even *immoral* character, like its corresponding knowledge: differences between individuals mean nothing to them. It is a power consisting of automatism, which belongs to everyone and to no one; a power that is not *value,* nor *justice,* which can make a person powerful without making him superior at the same time.

However, this is possible only because, in the world of technology, one does not and cannot speak of a true *act,* namely an action that begins directly from the Self and affirms itself in the order of real causes. Being absolutely mechanical and inorganic, hence lacking relations with the essence of the Self, the world of technology represents the antithesis of anything that may have the character of real power, created out of superiority, or stamped with superiority, incommunicable, inalienable, spiritual. We must acknowledge that man today, for all his knowledge of phenomena and though surrounded by his countless diabolical machines, is as miserable and lost as ever; spiritually, he is a worse barbarian than those whom he presumed to call by this name; he is increasingly conditioned rather than conditioning, and thus he is exposed to reactions in an interplay of irrational forces that ephemeralize the mirage of his exclusively material power and things. He is farther away from the path of self-realization than man was in any other civilization, because a surrogate of knowledge and power that one may well call diabolical replaces authentic knowledge and power in him.

10. Once it is understood that knowledge, from an initiatic point of view, means identification and realization, it will no longer be a surprise that in some traditional texts, after explaining modes or names of deities, it is added that those who "know" them acquire various powers: it will also not come as a surprise to often hear mention of a "secret," which, having been "known" or "transmitted," yields the key of power. Only simpleminded people would believe that this is a matter of a mere formula that can be transmitted verbally or in writing, if not by telegram.

32
THE NATURE OF INITIATIC KNOWLEDGE

In the initiatic domain, we repeat, authentic knowledge is *justice,* sanction of a dignity, natural and inalienable emanation of an integrated life, according to the well-defined degrees of such an integration. Just as in this order of things knowledge achieved beyond the uncertainty and ambiguity of sensible phenomena does not refer to formulae or to abstract explicative principles, but rather to real beings grasped through immediate spiritual perception—likewise, the ideal of power here is that of an action occurring not subject to natural laws, but above them; not among phenomena, but among the causes of phenomena, with the irresistibility and the right proper to him who is superior. And this superiority comes from having effectively disengaged himself from the human condition, and from having achieved the initiatic awakening.

II

The Path of Awakening According to Gustav Meyrink[11]

The beginning is what man lacks.

It is not that it is difficult for him to find it. It is precisely the preconceived idea of having to find it that becomes a stumbling block.

Life is generous; at every instant it gives us a new beginning. Every second we are confronted by the question: "Who am I?" We do not ask it, and this is why we do not find the beginning.

But if for once we were to take it seriously, a new day would arise, whose dusk would spell death for those thoughts that have infiltrated the *royal palace* and now sponge at the table of our souls.

The coral reef that these thoughts have diligently created in the course of millennia and which we call "our body" is their work and the place where they dwell and breed. If we really want to reach the open sea, we must first open a breach in this reef of glue and lime, and then redissolve it into the spirit that it originally was.

Those who do not learn *to see* on this earth will certainly not learn in the "great *beyond.*"

The key to the power over the lower nature has been rusted since the Flood. It is called, *"to be awake."*

To be awake is everything.

There is nothing that man can be more certain of than being awake. The truth is that he is caught in a net of sleep and dream that he himself has woven. The thicker the net, the mightier is his sleep. Those who are caught in it are the sleepers who go through life as cattle to the slaughter, dumb, indifferent, and thoughtless.

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11. The following excerpts are found in G. Meyrink's *Das grüne Gesicht* (The Green Face; Leipzig: K. Wolff, 1917), 281–287, 291, 294–301, 360–361; and in his *Der Golem* (The Golem; Leipzig: K. Wolff, 1916), 448–450. The translation from the German is by Joscelyn Godwin.

35
THE PATH OF AWAKENING ACCORDING TO GUSTAV MEYRINK

To be awake is everything.

The first step in this direction is so easy that any child can take it; only the misled has forgotten how to walk, with both feet paralyzed, because he will not throw away the crutches he has inherited from his ancestors.

Be awake in all that you do! Do not think you are already awake. No: you are asleep and dreaming.

Be firm, collect yourself, and briefly behold the sensation that runs through your body: "NOW I AM AWAKE!"

If you can *feel* this, you will also suddenly realize that, in comparison, the state in which you were a few moments ago is like stupor and sleepiness. This is the first feeble step in a very long journey from slavery to omnipotence. Walk in this fashion from one awakening to the next. There is no pestering thought that you cannot thereby dispel; it is left behind and can no longer reach you. You overshadow it, just as the canopy of a tree outgrows its dried-up limbs.

Once you have reached the point where this awakening also permeates your body, sorrows will fall off you like dead leaves.

The ice-cold ritual baths of the Jews and Brahmins; the vigils of Buddha's disciples and of the Christian ascetics; the torments of Indian fakirs to keep from falling asleep—these are all nothing but external, crystallized rituals, which like broken columns bear witness to the seeker: "Here, very long ago, stood a mysterious temple dedicated to awakening."

Read the sacred scriptures of every people on earth: through all of them runs the scarlet thread of the secret doctrine of awakening. It is the ladder of Jacob, who wrestled with the Angel of the Lord all "night," until the "day" broke and he was victorious.

If you want to overcome death itself, whose armor is sleep, dream, and dullness, you must climb from one step of awakening to the next. Imagine: the lowest step of this heavenly ladder is called "genius." What name shall we then give to the highest ones? They remain unknown to the multitudes and are considered to be legend.

On your way to awakening, the first enemy that will bar your path is your own body. It will fight against you till cockcrow. However, if you behold the day of eternal awakening that will pluck you from the sleepwalkers who think themselves men and do not know that they are sleeping

gods—then even the body's sleep will vanish and the entire universe be subject to you.

Then you will be able to perform miracles at will, without having to wait humbly like a whimpering slave for a cruel God to bestow his grace upon you, or strike your head off.

It is true: you will no longer know the happiness of a faithful and tail-wagging dog that comes from acknowledging a master above itself, whom it must serve. But ask yourself this question: now that you are a man, would you like to trade places with your own dog?

All those who experience the earth as a prison, and every believer who cries for redemption—such people unconsciously evoke *the world of ghosts*.

Do it too, but be fully aware!

Will those who do it unconsciously find an invisible hand to magically transform into solid ground the marshes into which they stray? I do not want to argue, but I don't believe so.

When on the way of *awakening* you go through the world of ghosts, you will gradually recognize that they too are nothing but thoughts that you can suddenly see with your eyes. This is the reason that they look alien to you and like beings; for the language of forms is different from the language of the brain.[12]

Then the time has come for the strangest transformation that can ever happen to you: out of the people surrounding you, ghosts emerge. All

12. The "world of ghosts" or "astral world" is nothing other than the world of deep-seated forces, partly individual, partly collective and super-individual, that are at work in man as a whole. These forces, as soon as the consciousness is freed from its connection with the brain, are projected into and visualized as symbolic images. Man then sees outside of himself that which, being inside of him, he could not really and previously know. In the world of ghosts (or "Similar Natures," as Kremmerz called them) he can know himself and *must only know himself.* At that time the apparitions look like larvae or ghosts, and a fearful sense of solitude sets in. This experience is eventually followed by another, to which Meyrink alluded when talking about the "deeper meaning" of each apparition; through the various energies, of which the astral images are a symbol, it is possible to go back to *real and cosmic* beings, under whose influence man has fallen and who have been essential for his life. If a *fire of knowledge and purification* burns up the world of ghosts, what emerges from it is the first experience of the kingdom of *"Those Who Are."* More on this later. (Note by UR)

those who have been dear to you suddenly become larvae, including your own body.

It is the most terrifying solitude that one can imagine. It is like a pilgrimage through the desert: those who do not find the spring of life in it die of thirst.

This is the sign, or the stigma, of all those who have been bitten by the "Snake of the spiritual world." It almost seems as if two lives must be grafted onto us like a slip onto a common tree, before the *miracle of awakening* can occur.[13] The separation that otherwise occurs in death occurs here through the extinction of memories, or sometimes due to a sudden inner upheaval.

Everybody could attain this if he had the key. The key consists simply in becoming aware of one's "form of the Self" or of one's *skin,* even though one may be asleep, in discovering the narrow crack through which consciousness slips between waking and deep sleep.

The struggle for immortality is a battle for the control over the sounds and ghosts that dwell in us; the waiting for our "Self" to become King *is the waiting for the Messiah.*

Everything I have said here is also found in the scriptures of every people, namely the advent of a new Kingdom, the awakening, the victory over the body and solitude. And yet a bridgeless abyss separates us from these people: they *believe* that a day is coming when good people will enter Paradise and evil people will be swallowed into the pit of Hell. We, on the contrary, *know* that a time will come when many will reawaken and be separated from those who sleep, as lords from slaves, because the sleepers cannot understand the awakened. We *know* that there is no good and evil, but only "truth" and "falsehood." They *believe* that "being awake" consists in keeping the senses and the eyes open and the body erect during the night to recite prayers. We *know* that "being awake" corresponds to the awakening of the immortal Self, and that sleeplessness of the body is just its natural consequence. They *believe* that the body must be neglected and despised due to its sinfulness. We *know* that sin does not exist, that the body is where we have to start and that we have come down to earth in order to transform it into spirit. They *believe* that it is necessary to go with one's

13. In this regard, see the mention of the preliminary discipline of "feeling two" found in the essay by Abraxas in this chapter. (Note by UR)

own body into solitude in order to purify the spirit. We *know* that our spirit must first go into solitude in order to transfigure the body.

It is up to you and to you alone to choose your path: ours or theirs. Your free will has to make the choice.

I have said that the beginning of the way is our own body. Those who know this can begin the journey at any time.

Now I will teach you the first steps.

You must become detached from your body, but not as if you wished to abandon it. You must free yourself from it *as if trying to separate light from heat.*

Here lurks the first enemy.

Those who *separate* themselves from their bodies in order to fly through space go the way of the witches, who have turned their gross earthly body into a ghostly one and ride it like a broom to Walpurgis Night.

Witches believe they are at the Devil's Sabbat, while their bodies lie senseless and rigid in their rooms. They merely exchange their earthly perception for a spiritual one; they lose their best part to gain a worse one; theirs is an impoverishment rather than an enrichment.

You can already see that this is not the way to awakening. In order to grasp that you are not your body (as most people believe), you must recognize the weapons that your body uses to maintain its power over you. You are so much at its mercy that your life would end if your heart ceased to beat; also, you plunge into the night as soon as you close your eyes. You believe you can move your body around, but this is an illusion; on the contrary, it is your body that moves itself, merely borrowing your will. You think you can create thoughts. You are mistaken: it is your body that sends them to you so that you think they came from you, and do its bidding.

Sit up straight and resolve neither to move a limb nor to blink, and to remain as still as a statue; then you will see how your body, filled with hatred, rebels against you, attempting to subjugate you again. It will assail you with a thousand weapons and give you no rest until you allow it to move again. By its fierce anger and its excessive struggle, as if flinging dart after dart at you, if you are sly you will realize how much it fears to lose its control and how great your power must be if it is so afraid of you.

However, to dominate your body should not be the ultimate goal you pursue. When you forbid it to move, you must do it only in order to come to know the forces on which its dominion extends: they are legion, almost infinite in number. Your body will send them to fight against you, one after the other, as long as you continue to resist its urges by merely sitting still. The first weapon will be the brute force of muscles that quiver and throb; seething blood that makes the face sweat; hammering of the heart; cold shivers on the skin; swaying of the body, as if your center of gravity had shifted. You will be able to face and defeat all of these forces, thanks to your will. But it will not be the will alone: there is a higher awakening behind it, invisible like Siegfried's magical helm.

This victory too is not meaningless. Even if you were to master your breathing and your heartbeat, you would just be a fakir, which means a "pauper."

The next champions that your body sends against you are elusive swarms of thoughts.

Against them, the sword of the will is powerless. The wilder you strike at them, the more rabidly they buzz around you; even if you succeeded in momentarily getting rid of them, you would become lethargic and thus be defeated in a different way.

To order them to stay still is a waste of energy. There is only one way to escape from them: *take refuge in a higher degree of awakening.*

How to achieve it is something you must learn on your own.

It is a constant and cautious proceeding with feelings, and at the same time an iron resolution.

This is all I can say about it to you. Any advice that anyone gives to you in this painful struggle is poison. There is a cliff here over which none can help you but yourself.

After reaching this state, you are then confronted by the domain of ghosts, which I have spoken of earlier.

Frightening or splendid apparitions will confront you, making you believe they are beings from another world. In truth, they are only thoughts in visible form over which you do not yet have full control!

Remember: the more solemn they look, the more dangerous they are!

However, when you find the "deeper meaning" hidden in each of these larval beings, you will see with the eye of the spirit not only their living

nucleus, but yours as well. Then, everything that has been taken from you will be returned to you a thousandfold, as it happened to Job: then you will be back where you started, as fools claim sarcastically. They do not know that there is a difference between coming home after a long time in a foreign land and always staying home.

Nobody knows if you will be allowed to share in the prodigious forces once possessed by ancient prophets, or if you are destined to enter eternal peace.

Our path leads to the threshold of maturity. Once you arrive at it, you are also worthy of receiving that gift.

In either case, you will have become a *phoenix:* it is up to you to get there *by force.*

One of those who still have the key of magic has remained behind, on earth, to seek and to rally those who have been called.

Just as he cannot die, the legend about him cannot die either.

Some say he is the *Wandering Jew;* others call him Elijah; the Gnostics claim he is John the Evangelist. Naturally, everybody has his own ideas about this figure. A being like him, who has transformed his body into spirit, cannot be tied to any rigid form.

The only true immortal being is the *awakened* man. Stars and gods disappear; he alone endures and can achieve anything he wants. There is no God above him.

It is not without reason that our way has been called a *pagan way.* That which a religious man believes about God is nothing but a *state* that he himself could achieve, if he could only believe in himself. But he obtusely sets up obstacles over which he does not dare to jump. He creates an image to worship, instead of *transforming* himself into it.

If you want to pray, pray to your invisible Self: it is the only God who can answer your prayers. The other gods hand you stones instead of bread.

When your invisible Self appears in you as an *entity,* you will recognize it by the fact that it will cast a *shadow.* I myself did not know earlier on who I was, until I saw my own body as a shadow.

Luce

Opus Magicum

Fire

Fire is regarded as the most important element in the magical ritual, though not the only one.

Several different meanings have been attributed to it, according to the particular functions for which it is employed. Foremost among them is that of vivifying principle and of purifying element, which we will now discuss.

We should mention, among the many symbols referring to *fire,* that of *ignis centrum terrae,*[14] the central fire, which is common to every tradition. In man, the heart is at the center of his being, red with warm blood departing from there to permeate the entire organism with the waves of life. The heart is portrayed as luminous and blazing, radiating loving flames and light. But in order to better understand this, let us remember that in ancient Egypt the heart was indicated as the organ of intelligence, which is an exclusively spiritual faculty. The heart is the most perfect and immediate manifestation of the spirit, and it is inviolable in its peculiar character of absolute harmonious spontaneity. In hieroglyphics, the heart is portrayed as a *vase* (h'tj), with two handles or *ears.* This precision of meaning, gradually subverted over the course of the past twenty centuries until the organic function of ordinary thinking and also of *intelligere* came to be attributed to the brain, has accurately been conveyed in Dante's *intellect of love.* Notice again how in modern language there are terms that refer to a particular function of intelligence, such as the verb "to remember" and the expression "to learn by heart."[15] Notice also the difference between *recordari*

14. Symbolically speaking, the "earth," as also the "stone," represents the human body, with special relation to its being Matter for the Great Work: "Upon this stone I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18). (Note by UR)

15. Dante has clearly indicated this in several passages, particularly in his *Vita nova,* § 2, where he speaks of "the spirit of life, which dwells in the most secret chamber of the heart . . ." Among the Romans, Plautus said: *"Mihi sunt tria corda"* (I have three hearts) to indicate that he knew three languages—Oscan, Latin, and Greek.

and *meminisse,* between *remembering* and *recalling.* The science of language could make a remarkable contribution to modern psychology, shedding light on some hitherto mysterious points and suggesting to the careful observer the lost meaning of many symbols.

Thus it is necessary that during the ritual, all the functions of the spirit, in its relations with the material body, be reduced to the state of primitive and perfect harmony and consciousness. Not only is it necessary to become persuaded about this or that truth, but one must act in such a way as to put the spirit in full control of what it does.

The ritual mentioned here is connected with the practice of breathing, which is executed according to the formula 2n (inspiration), n (retention), 2n (expiration), n (retention) in an early phase; and 2n, 4n, 2n, n in a later phase. The ritual can be performed in the first phase, too. This will be discussed later on. For now it is enough to know the meaning of the spirit, assumed in concentration and in silence, which, as an animating and sustaining essence of man, is symbolized by breath. Breath is necessary to bodily life, just as fire is indispensable to any form of physical life, hence "the breath of fire" in various symbolisms. This is mentioned here as a guide in experiences that sometimes have various simultaneous aspects.

Lying down, after achieving the perfect rhythm of breathing in the above-mentioned phases, so that this organic function may continue with absolute spontaneity and without requiring any particular attention, one descends to the roots of being through "concentration" and "silence." When one reaches the supreme phase and frees the spirit, this is realized as a small flame burning in one's heart. The body must be experienced as pervaded by a *wave* of subtle warmth, flowing through the veins and the nerves. The flame burns, stating: "I AM!" The heart will feel as if it is burning and will be dissolved in the element of the magical Fire.

In this process, the greatest difficulty (if "difficulty" is the most adequate term in relation to such an act of the spirit) consists in the consciousness's, the spirit's, or the Self's *descent* into the heart. In fact, we are very accustomed to feel and to experience ourselves in the brain. Someone may even feel himself in a sense organ, when the perception is of such

an intensity and violence that it attracts every attention toward a given point of the body. Thus, one momentarily feels like *sinking,* wherever the sensation of pain or pleasure has arisen. The process of descent into the heart is analogous to this, although none of those sensations is felt.[16] Let us recall the spirit's "sense of infinity and unconditional freedom," which is the last state of ritual *silence.* There should be no difficulty there in operating perfectly, causing the spirit to concentrate and to *coagulate* anywhere it wills. However, the habit of the consciousness tied to an organ like the brain is such that the spirit is almost automatically attracted wherever it finds its habitual dwelling place. It is therefore necessary, in this case, to realize and to feel oneself as a mass of light consistency that descends from the brain, through the centers of the larynx and pharynx, down to the heart, slowly, following an ideal rather than a physical line, gently and effortlessly. The spontaneity itself is actualized in the magical action and in its most perfect and complete form.

As warm and vaguely bright silence (the body, as the spirit determines itself, acquires a bituminous consistency, the limits of which cannot be determined in space), the spirit becomes denser, bright, warmer. Despite the absence of the *perception* of bodily space, the spirit is aware of finding its place in it (a wave of warm, fluctuating light). The body becomes denser as the spirit turns toward the heart (a conscious act: "I am in the heart, I feel it, *I live it*"). One becomes aware of it as a new wonderful immensity, of which few people are aware: it is no longer restricted to the usual physical limitation, extending its *igneous* mass to the utmost darkness.

And now a clarification that needs to be deeply understood: man's life is ordinarily such that his action does not assign to itself its own objects,

16. In this regard, we find useful the following instructions found in an ancient codex of a monastery of Mt. Athos, attributed to the abbot Xerocarca: "Sit by yourself in a corner. Pay attention to what I say. Close the door and raise your spirit above every vain and temporal thing. Then lower your chin on your chest and with all the strength of your soul open the perceiving eye which is *in the middle of your heart.* Restrict your exhalations, so as not to breath too easily. Try hard to find the precise site of the heart, in which all the energies of the soul are destined to dwell. At first you will find darkness and experience resistance of impenetrable masses; but if you persevere day and night, you will eventually experience an inexpressible joy. As soon as you find the heart's location, the spirit sees what at first it was never able to see. It sees the air, between itself and the heart, shining clear and being permeated by a miraculous light." (Note by UR)

but rather receives them through the physical senses, as being imposed on it by them. So, in reality, man comes to depend on everything that is external and extraneous to him, on everything that is not himself. Not even the complex functioning of nervous reflexes is sufficient to affirm his own true freedom.

From this state of affairs derives the fundamental notion of *impurity,* which, according to the classical rituals of various initiatory systems, must be resolved into the original purity of the burning of the secret flame, before the neophyte can acquire the knowledge and use of magical power. The fire of the spirit is thus initially directed to the catharsis of those dark elements that until now have ruled uncontested; to burn in the supreme act of a perfect "knowledge" everything that is "ignorance"; to penetrate into the bowels of the "Earth" and to purify "metals" from various drosses; "Gold," which through the help of "Sulfur" raises the inferior elements up to its dignity; Sperm, which mingled with the menstruum of the Whore, generates the Divine Child.[17]

Ritually speaking, once the spirit has been established in the heart (which appears as an igneous mass), waves and bright flashes surface in the consciousness, beyond the boundaries of darkness, as symbols and mediums of the formless passive life. In the heart the spirit creates a small flame, turning its essence into the latter's essence. Let the flame burn, *by itself,* without any other support than its own wonderful power—a light shining in the red cavity of the heart.

This is a timeless moment.

Then, let the flame-spirit-consciousness grow by itself, slowly and gradually growing bigger and more intense, more tenacious, alive, and vivid, harder than a diamond . . .

More and more.

Let it burn and consume beyond the limits of the heart, expanding until it pervades the entire bodily nature, dissolving it into itself.

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17. The "Whore" in several alchemical and Gnostic texts symbolizes the humid principle, above all in its expression of yearning, passivity, and openness to receive indifferently any form. Once this is assumed and acted upon by the initiatic fiery principle, it becomes transformed and fixed, giving rise to the nature of the regenerated ones. Then it corresponds to the symbol of the "Virgin," who has *under* her feet the lunar and serpentine symbol (representing her original nature), and who holds in her arms the Divine Child. (Note by UR)

The purification of the elements is thus fulfilled, and the spirit gradually acquires the immediate control, the conscious perception of each organ, of each smallest part of the physical body.

Having reached and *fixed* the last state, one needs to proceed backward and return to normal consciousness, following the spontaneous succession of phases, analogous to the previous ones, until one gets to the form of a small flame in the heart. Then suddenly end the ritual, remaining in this state.

After some time it will be easy to move rapidly to the heart and to arouse a flame in it. This flame will eventually remain burning as an inner act throughout the day; it will also be easy, starting from the heart, to penetrate any part of the body and to live in its complex functions. Thus, consciousness, once definitely reinstated in its natural seat, will be able to experience states that are very different from the past habitual ones, and to operate in consequence, realizing what has been expressed in the symbols of the inextinguishable flame.

The ritual should be performed in the middle of the day, when the sun is at its zenith.

Abraxas

Three Ways

By now you should understand what the main task of our Art is: detach yourself from the humid substance that you are made of, and be regenerated in the solar strength. Be transformed by it into a "being who is," or into a *breathing* center, freed from the bonds of sublunar natures. You must wear out the thirst, the fever, and the endless and dark yearning for existence. This is the condition for going beyond the law of men.

But this operation (the Hermeticists called it *mortificatio* and *putrefactio*) can be performed in different ways. Familiarize yourself with them, but also be aware that they are not equally valid for the ultimate goal. Learn what each one has to offer, so that by combination you may achieve the sense of perfect mastery.

1) There is a first path, which I will call "*empirical.*" Here, spiritual development has a discontinuous character: it consists of transformations of consciousness from one state to the next, without an intrinsic connection between them. The Self is simply *carried* from one to the other: it is an immediate, instant self-identifying or awakening in one or another states of consciousness, without any direct individual initiative, and without active preparation. Just as in a chemical experiment in which the elements and conditions required to produce a certain compound are known, but the result appears as something entirely new, as an entirely different substance, yet you are unable to grasp the intimate relationship of the process of the experiment, in the same way there are methods as precise as these that can analogously produce new states of consciousness.

This category includes the technique based on the action of particular substances in conjunction with certain attitudes of the soul, as well as some techniques of Hatha Yoga, which are efficacious provided certain physiological-psychical dispositions are in place. In this category you can also include some experiences brought about directly with specific goals by those who have the necessary power, and finally as a series of appar-

ently spontaneous phenomena, such as the sudden illumination of extranormal modes of sensation or of self-perception in one's consciousness (Pietro Negri has described one such case in the previous chapter). Even in these latter two possibilities, there is a discontinuity and an overwhelming instantaneity of the states of consciousness. "First this, then that."

The negative aspect of this path lies in the fact that the realizations which you may attain are, for the most part, of an exceptional character. Rather than apprehension and a sudden intuition, an effective and permanent possession demands such a powerful technique as to completely *mortify* or transform the natural being. Otherwise, once the influx has ended, you will find yourself back in the same place you began, because your sense of self has retained its habit of identifying with its natural sense of being. When, on the contrary, *everything* is taken away, and *if* you clearly continue to exist, the new state will be your regenerated consciousness. I said "*if* you continue to exist"; however, be prudent, because it is very likely that if you try to achieve a total fulfillment only in this way, your leap *may turn out to be too short:* unless you have gone totally "beyond," you will have to fight bitter struggles, with only an inadequate tool at your disposal.[18]

The positive side of this path consists of the fact that the discontinuity between the normal way on the one hand and the initiatic modes of consciousness on the other can never be entirely removed. These are awakenings, enlightenments, and evidences of something so new that it is impossible to give an adequate prefiguration. There can be an approximation, a reaching out toward them; however, the real transformation itself, the *presence,* will always consist in a leap. On the other hand, only this "presence" can infuse in you a transcendent power to comprehend and to act, without which any effort on your part would be in vain. Your eye would be forced to look within itself, as it is surrounded by darkness; your will would remain tied down, struggling, obtuse, unaware of the liberated clarity and powerful lightness of superior beings.

Thus, in our way you will also find elements of the "empirical" method.

18. See Synesius, *De insomniis,* 4–5, where he talks about those who tried to regain their freedom through the use of force, carrying their spirit "where the grasp of nature cannot reach." But "if the leap falls short of the limits, bitter struggles become necessary. . . . Even if they abandon their ascent, they still undergo a punishment for having attempted."

These elements must be integrated by a personal transforming initiative, so that the transcendent states may be fully assimilated and your entire being carried into them. You will not be lost, acted upon, and "swept away" in these states, but will remain truly active, affirmative, present.

2) The second direction represents that which the *mystical experience* can supply or propitiate, in a context of opportune initiatic integration. It is a method that essentially acts through the soul and feelings.

In order to understand how it must be realized, be aware that the secret of its inception consists in creating in yourself a *dual being.* You must generate—first by imagining and then by realizing it—a superior principle confronting everything you usually are (e.g., an instinctive life, thoughts, feelings). This principle must be able to control, contemplate, and measure what you are, in a clear knowledge, moment by moment. There will be two of you: yourself standing before "the other." Then you will know the meaning of "inner dialogues," the inward commanding and obeying, the inward asking for and obtaining of advice, as in the case of many Christian and Muslim mystics, and similarly reflected in many Hindu texts that were compiled in dialogue form; the characters depicted in them are not real persons, but are seen by a skilled disciple as two parts of his own soul.

All in all, the work consists of a "reversal": you have to turn the "other" into "me" and the "me" into the "other." Depending upon which of the two principles the person focuses on, you will have the *Dry Way* or the *Humid Way,* the magical method or the mystical method.

In the mystical method, the mind creates an "other" that still remains "other" (the Master, "Christ" to be imitated, and even the image of the Deity itself). The Self is not transformed; it remains in the feminine part, which consists of desire and need. As *soul,* the feminine "other" reaches out to Him in an élan of renunciation, love, adoration, and complete devotion. *Sui iuris non esse* (not to be one's own law), letting one's will die completely, to give oneself to God with inner poverty and humility, consecrating to Him every act with pure faith, wishing nothing for oneself, experiencing an untold suffering and love; this is what the *mortificatio* requires from those who follow the Humid Way, since they do not possess the strength of an active detachment, but rather yearn for the Eternal, their center being located in the "Waters," in the "soul," or, in other words,

precisely in what needs to be depotentized.[19]

However, this way has many imperfections. First among them is the difficulty of transcending the dualism proper to love (in the union proper to love, the loved one and the lover communicate with each other but also remain distinct) and of achieving the *identity* that is the law of every initiatic realization. Thus even at the peaks of Christian mystical theology (which follows exactly this path) we still find a dualism that rarely generates the true substantial transformation into the "other," in which duality, together with the corresponding divine personifications, marks the appearance of a given phase of the process.

A relationship saturated by desire and love is, moreover, negative and dependent; it has the character of *need.* To turn it into the purely affirmative, central, and self-sufficient solar nature requires a qualitative leap and a daring that is very difficult for a mystic to achieve, considering the contrary nature of the previous mortification.

In addition, through the disposition from which one begins (which is not an active attraction and determination, but a waiting and a desiring), it so happens that the transcendent states appear as a *revelation:* you are not *integrated* in them, but remain passive and rootless under their strikingly miraculous power. Ruysbroeck said: "Amidst a feeling of astonishment, something is born: it is an act of grace. Lord, I am not worthy of it!" Moreover, in a text called *Light On the Path,* it is written: "You will enter the Light, but you will never touch the Flame."

Thus, if you follow the mystical path, make sure to realize the "unitive state." It will transport you and absorb you; flowing into the universal Light, you will suddenly become this very same Light. With the extinction and fulfillment of your yearning for God, your center will "drown," and this drowning will appear to you as the Ultimate Good and as the highest goal. Our way sees "ecstasy" only as a test to *be passed* and as a "solvent," but never as the ultimate goal.[19a] We do not seek "to go outside" ourselves (ecstasy-displacement), but rather to return and to take possession of the "seat of the Center." The mystical Light represents for us the "Higher Waters," in which your individuality must not diminish, but rather *reawaken.*

19. It is well to note that this is only one of the possible interpretations of the "Humid Way." (Note by UR)

19a. In alchemy, this could refer to the "whitening," which is followed by the "reddening."

The positive side of this path consists in the room left to individual initiative. Be aware, though, that the mystic, both by believing in the objective, personal, and distinct reality of the ideal of his superior principle (Jesus Christ, as an example to be imitated, or God himself) and by referring to himself the regenerating action ("the action of grace"), unconsciously actualizes some general laws of transcendent praxis. According to these laws, an image "acts" precisely when it is not *thought,* but presented figuratively and contemplatively fixed in the imagination, and *loved* as if it were a true reality, distinct from the contemplator. According to these laws, the yearning for growth needs to be killed and your inner being needs to rise in silence due to an impersonal, calm, and occult force and not under the desire to grow. This desire, in fact, would paralyze growth itself and harden you, due to an unavoidable strengthening of the bond of the Self. These are purely technical details that have nothing moral, religious, or sentimental about them, even though the mystic experiences them under this illusory and mythological guise. For instance, in the "imitation of Christ," we find a series of images that act by arousing subtle forces that would first produce a "death" and then a "resurrection," even if Christ had never existed.

Keep in mind that for modern man, the Royal Path usually starts from the humid principle, even though immediately after, this water must be made dry and arid. A spiritual *hunger* or the despotic need to entirely own yourself often leads to the Way. It is the "hoarse and inarticulate cry of the humid nature" from which a "logos of light" (according to *Pymander*) draws a "pure, subtle, penetrating, rising fire."

Thus, you can regard the special methods based on an exhaustion leading to a self-excess of energies of the inferior nature as intermediate forms between the Dry Way and the Humid Way: the sacrificial way, the violent, orgiastic, Dionysian ecstasy, and also the path followed by the *Tantrikas.* More will be said on this later.

3) In the magical, dry, or solar way, you will create a duality in your being not in an unconscious and passive manner (as the mystic does), but consciously and willingly; you will shift directly on the higher part and *identify* yourself with that superior and subsistent principle, whereas the mystic tends to identify with his lower part, in a relationship of need and of abandonment. Slowly but gradually, you will strengthen this "other" (which is yourself) and create for it a supremacy, until it knows how to dominate all the

powers of the natural part and master them totally. What is required of you is a discipline of firmness and sobriety until an equilibrium is created, namely the quality of a life that owns itself and is free with regard to itself, cleansed from instincts and from the obscure appetite of the natural being, in both flesh and mind. Only then will you be able to employ, usefully and in an auxiliary fashion, some "corrosive water" (an alchemical expression denoting violent methods such as toxic substances, the use of wine and sex, suspension of breath, and so forth). By attacking the natural connections, these give the fixed and preestablished nucleus the possibility of expanding and bursting forth more energetically. However, if this nucleus were not already established, the "corrosive waters," by dissolution, would lead you not above but below the condition from which you first started.

The affirmative discipline is enhanced by *transformations* provoked by some direct method, upon which the entire being, ready and compliant, reaffirms itself, digests and lets itself be digested, leaving nothing behind. These leaps are faster rhythms in which you must be able to transform the slow tempo of your incarnated being, in the same way that a surfer rides a wave; wherever the wave goes, so does the surfer, thus rejoining himself, remaining affirmative, firm, and centered.

Then the solar and golden nature in you will be able to break the equilibrium and be the *stronger one:* the other nature (your Self, your senses, and your mind) will be *under your control.* At that point you can even suspend them, make them inert, neutralized, fixed. This is *Silence,* the "extinction of mania," the dissolving of the fog. Then, in your clarified eye, the cyclical, integral vision will shine forth; you will *see* your transcendent essence, the destiny of beings and of all things, and the kingdom of "Those Who Are." You will grasp the mode of action in a pure state, and you will grasp the mode of immaterial motion that operates outside every space or body in a timeless, creative rapidity. The center in you will amalgamate with universal, non-becoming nature, and will derive from it a divine strength that expresses itself through miraculous powers. You will be able to focus on the knowledge of the Names and on the wedding with the Letters. You will be *initiated.*

The "knowledge of the Waters" and the sense of awakening need to be integrated with the awareness of these various methodical possibilities, in order to obtain a power of awareness and discrimination, before the elements of magical practice are revealed to you.

Leo

Attitudes

In the previous essay, entitled "Barriers," I have outlined some changes of perspective that must become *organic* in us. It certainly takes a long period of time to eliminate some deep-rooted conditions that paralyze every possibility of inner realization. We feel free in our thought and seem to ourselves to have achieved a great result when we reject some traditional prejudice. Nonetheless, we are still at the beginning. There are ideas that have become an organic part of ourselves; at the moment of translating the task into reality, the obstacle that was overcome with the mind still exists in us and inhibits the experience. We wonder why we do not achieve results, because we do not know what in ourselves has opposed them. If we know all this, then it will be possible to become aware of this dualism between mere thought and inner constitution, between thoughts connected to the brain and thoughts that live *in essence* within us, rooted in other organs. I have mentioned the *rhythm*. When the brain loses interest in a known and repeated concept and lets it go free, then begins the possibility for the concept itself to descend in us: it will become in us a real force.

What I have said about the changes in vision and about the new, infinite concept of the self and of the world, which, after they acquire a rhythm, become a new sense of ourselves and of the world itself, also applies to some attitudes that need to be evoked and cultivated. These attitudes are the necessary condition for development; they must not remain on the surface of our consciousness. It is not enough to think of them or even to practice them: they must sink into the root of our entire being.

One of these attitudes may be called the *sense of air.* With the help of the imagination, we can experience the element "air" that permeates and vivifies everything; we can also experience its changing character, its silent presence, and all the gradations of motion, from subtle, imperceptible brush-

ing to power, impetus, and violence. We perceive air as extremely free, rootless, without origins, without cause, prone to the most extreme variations at a blink of an eye. After our imagination, having acquired this sense, has *felt* it and lived it—then it becomes necessary to *transfuse* it into us, to *make it into a state of our own consciousness,* to be maintained in the face of our experiences of the external world.

This, as well as the other forms of imagination that are used in an initiatic manner, must be transferred from the center of the head to the "heart": it is here that the image can be transformed into an inner state and become a similar *quality,* or an analogous *power.* That which we have called the "sense of air" becomes a deep sense of freedom from what in us is hereditary and automatically acquired. It is a liberation from the chains of instinctive reactions, of disproportionate or deformed reactions. It is a tension and flexibility that allows, besides profound rest and concentration, the maximum unfurling of active force. It is an open-minded feeling, ready to receive knowledge and experiences in their own true light, without instinctive and emotive deformations. It is to possess all the forces of the past, and yet to be able to be born again at any time with a sense of *newness.*

Another imaginative attitude is that which may be called the *sense of fire,* or the sense of heat. It consists in imagining the beneficial effects of heat, in feeling penetrated and vivified by it (as a fertile life both inside and outside of us), present and perennial as the sunlight. To feel in us this heat as our own, as if the radiant sun were in us.

This image will spontaneously shift to the "heart"; it will directly find the way to the subtle centers of the heart, because it is not possible to feel it intensely and at the same time to retain it in the brain. This heat center that awakes in us will always have to be present in our inner experience, as an *active emotion* opposed to the reflective and passive emotions provoked by exterior causes. It is not possible to have an icy and purely cerebral awakening. All the rules and possibilities of an initiatic education will not yield fruits without this sense of fire, reawakened in the heart. This is why people in the past have followed the path of devotion; however, such a path was too often polluted by prejudices and passive emotions and could

not bestow knowledge. By descending into the heart, people lost the sense of the Self and got stuck in the sensitive-sentimental domain.

It is easy to underestimate the practices that employ visualizations, since the latter appear to be of no account when compared to the great promises of the esoteric sciences. But my experience, as I attempted and followed different paths, wasting time and energy, compels me to help other practitioners to avoid mistakes that leave their imprint for a long time, deforming the harmony of our being. The brief comment regarding the abovementioned practices will help us live intensely in the inner movements, detached from sensible impressions and yet with all the liveliness and reality proper to the latter. Thus we will have a spontaneous development of those subtle powers that act in the higher vision.

It will also be necessary to prepare ourselves for that which we must see and know, anticipating knowledge with a clear mental view of what is awaiting us. Imagine an impossibility: a man who has lived all of his life in a dark cell, without human contact, without light and sound, all of a sudden is thrown out into the world. What would happen to him is terrible indeed. And yet this is the condition of him who, having lived in the narrow prison of the senses, suddenly has his spiritual vision opened.

Even if it were possible to overcome the sense of bewilderment and terror, he would be aware that he was seeing and yet would not be able to describe it, much less know how he sees. What men seek is not so much some powerful ecstatic condition but rather the awareness and knowledge of the spiritual world, inside and outside themselves.

Commentaries on the *Opus Magicum*

The discourses by Luce and Leo included in this chapter outline the introduction to one of the first and fundamental operations in the initiatic art: the *transferring of the sense of the Self into the region of the heart.* In this context the heart should not be understood as a physical reality, but *sub specie interioritatis* (from the inner point of view) and as the *center* of the human being.

We add that, contrary to common opinion, according to the traditional teaching everything that is mental, reflective, and cerebral must be referred to the lunar, feminine, passive element; conversely, to the heart must be attributed the quality of the solar, masculine, and central element.

In this regard, however, one should not think of what is commonly ascribed to the heart (sentimentality, passions, and so forth). The occult realization of the heart (or of one's Self in the heart) has instead the meaning of an initial relation with the *subtle* or *elementary* aspect of reality.

There are images that, being realized in a contemplative manner, naturally favor this translation of the sense of Self (indirect method). One can also try to carry out this translation directly, which will then be followed by the experience of a particular state (direct method). Leo and Luce have discussed both of these ways.

To these matters, I want to add a practice with which it is possible to go further in this direction, and thanks to which many other disciplines will be greatly enhanced and vivified. This practice breaks down into two phases, namely the moment that precedes falling asleep and the moment that follows waking up in the morning.

First of all, one needs to dwell intensely on the following thought: that the so-called waking life of ordinary human beings is nothing but a state of torpor, of drunkenness and dullness, a state of fog and unreality. When the violent voices of the external world, the impressions and the stirring of the senses, the power of feelings, thoughts, and actions finally cease, and when the invisible, occult hand of sleep suspends all this with a shroud of *inner*

silence—then the way for inner growth is open, through the awakening and the powerful rising of the Sun of Knowledge and of Reality. Unfortunately, in that precise moment we pass out and lose consciousness.

Remembering all this during the evening, before falling asleep, in a calm state, not being tired, having cleansed the mind of all worries, imagine through meditation to be at the foot of a mountain in the early hours of the morning, ready to begin the ascent. Slowly, let the ascent begin, while darkness fades away and the first light, then the sun, appears. You must continue to ascend, imagining the simultaneous rising of the sun in the sky, its growing, triumphant, expanding light shining over all things. Right at the moment you feel you have reached the peak of the mountain, become aware that the sun has reached its zenith in the clear, bright sky. Contemplation needs to be stopped at this point, as you recognize all this as *the sense of that which will effectively happen within, beyond the threshold of sleep, until the middle of the night.* Naturally, your ascent of the mountain and the rise of the sun from dawn to noon must be felt in strict correlation. Everything must be experienced from an inner perspective as a progression of awakening. This process, once the top of the mountain is reached, must give rise to a sense of *identification* with the noon light—radiant, silent, pure in the boundless ether.

In the morning, upon waking up, clear the mind from any residue of sleepiness and return through contemplation to the peak of the mountain, which is where you had remained; slowly head back to the valley below. In the meantime, the sun descends, sets, and every light will disappear by the time you reach the plain. This must be imagined *and remembered* as the meaning of the period between the middle of the night and the morning. *In the darkness of the day,* in which you find yourself when you awake, let the echo of the Light from above or the echo of the *Midnight Sun* linger in the *sensation* that *I am the bearer of this Light* that is now in your center, namely *in the heart.*

Then you will notice the new, *animated* sense, according to which the light of the physical sun will appear when these disciplines are realized and *lived.* Also, you should notice and pay much attention to any other new meaning that flashes in the midst of common perceptions. Besides mere imagining, try to really recall some of the impressions of that time in which, aside from dreams, consciousness is interrupted by sleep.

Keep in mind though, that *wanting* to remember pushes memories away.

What needs to be done is to *attract* memory, invoking it without desire, *loving it*. For the same purpose, it is necessary to awaken from sleep spontaneously, not due to noises, and much less due to the presence of somebody else in your room. The memory is also facilitated by a slight scent of musk, rose, or Florentine iris.

One of the instruments of operative magic is the ability to *fix* a feeling, to realize it as an objective *something*, not connected by the reference to my physical body; as a state that I can posit outside of myself, in space, so to speak, without it ceasing to be a conscious event. Nothing can be done in operative magic without the capability to evoke, nourish, and then free oneself (by inducing or projecting) from a feeling or a thought. This skill is somewhat connected to the *descent to the center of the earth*, and thus to the seat of the heart.

Another technical detail is in order. In order for any image to act in the way I am talking about, it must be *loved*. It must be assumed in a great, inner calm and then warmed up, almost nourished, with sweetness, without bringing the will or any effort into play, and much less without expectations. The Hermeticists called this agent "sweet fire," "fire that does not burn," and even "*fire of the lamp*" since it really has an *enlightening* effect on the images.

In addition to what Abraxas has written, I wish to emphasize two points.

The first point is that along the path of high magic there is no need, in following a discipline, to initially acknowledge the notions of "good" and "evil" in a moral sense. This may be necessary for a passive spirit, in whom the function of command is totally lacking: it is only because he does not find this function in himself that he seeks it elsewhere, wishing to *be commanded*. A being who is complete and integrated on the basis of *being two* (as Abraxas mentioned before) can create *in himself* the power to command and the power to obey, which are both absolute. When what is lacking is not only the power to command (heavier to most men than any other burden) but also the power to obey; when this *inability to obey* of the inferior part takes over, usurping the rights of the superior power—only then one finds unruliness, laxity, and that "false freedom" which many

mystics rightly recognize as one of the worst dangers on the path they follow. But this deviation should not be confused with the freedom of superior beings who know how to impose a law on themselves. Any discipline aimed at inducing the *death* of a certain part of one's will, and at awakening that in us which knows how to obey unconditionally, is an essential component of the magical path.

The second point is that, especially for the operative aspects of magic, one needs to nourish a faculty definable in these terms: *to be oneself beyond oneself,* in the terms of an élan, an active self-overcoming, and an affirmation that situates itself beyond one's individuality. In everyday life, heroism, heroic and even orgiastic intoxication, the pleasure of risking one's life, and even certain times of readiness for sacrifice are already signs pointing in this direction. The power of a life free from itself, capable of going beyond itself in this active form, is as important to magical and theurgical practice as the principles of absolute command and absolute obedience copresent in oneself. Those who are subject to the inner fetter of the Self either will not be able to go beyond the limit or will overcome it only at the cost of their own perdition.

Abraxas has pointed out that in order for the mystical way to yield good results from an initiatic point of view, it is necessary, at a certain point, to effect a *role reversal.* This reversal applies to the state in which, once the duality is created, the divine image embodying the higher Self stands before the mystic as another being. Interestingly, in Islamic esotericism there is a technical term indicating this change: *shath. Shath* literally means "exchange of roles" and expresses the point in which the mystic *absorbs* the divine image so fully that he feels it as his own Self, and feels his earlier Self as something foreign. The divine image then speaks from him. In Islam there are "sure signs" to recognize cases in which the *shath* has objectively occurred, as opposed to just being a matter of individual self-suggestion (e.g., the case of Ibn Arabi). However, we should warn that the esoteric truths that are experienced in this new condition must be kept secret, since they are dangerous for simple believers. Apparently the death suffered by El Hallaj, who is nevertheless regarded as one of the main teachers of esoteric Islam (Sufism), was due to the violation of this precept.

III

Leo

First Steps Toward the Experience of the "Subtle Body"

Just as we express our thoughts and feelings through sounds, words, and gestures, which thereby enter into the world of the senses, likewise our body is nothing but an expression created in the material world by an individuated and conscious essence existing behind the human appearance as its true center and strength. Yet it would be useless to seek a parallel between the organs and functions of the physical body on the one hand and the inner essence of man on the other hand, since the former are determined by conditions proper to the animal life and by their relationships with the external world. Thus they represent a deviation, albeit one necessary to certain purposes of existence. Therefore we cannot directly conclude from the function of an organ, as known to ordinary consciousness, its value as a *symbol* and *expression* of the Inner Man.

To say that the center of consciousness is in the "heart" echoes a Truth expressed in intuitive wisdom. When it was "proven" that this center was in the brain, true knowledge became silent and was replaced by sensible illusion.

The study of the organs will not teach us about the inner essence of man any more than the mere observation of the letters in a sentence can convey its meaning to one who does not know how to read. The only possibility of knowledge lies in sinking into one's own interiority, in order to follow from there the mysterious ways leading toward the material body.

The first step consists in creating an "inner environment" in which the organs of our *subtle body* (a provisional and very inadequate, though useful expression) may be awakened to consciousness, in the same way that our physical organs are reawakened by the impressions coming from the external world. Various ways lead to this goal; I will mention only one of

those that I consider to be among the best and most certain.

I would like to say beforehand that since the "external" world is, as we are, an expression of occult spiritual powers, we can engage in a relationship with external things that transcends the ordinary relationship of the senses, and one in which our inner being is forced to reveal itself.

We must try to perceive, parallel to every sensible impression, an impression that always accompanies each one yet is of a totally different kind (i.e., an echo in us of the intimate, supersensible nature of things) and which seeps silently into us.

Every living or lifeless thing offers us a specific occult message. If we try to grasp in our inner being what happens when we focus our attention on two different perceptions (for instance, that of a plant and that of an animal), by gradually abstracting from the sensible image and from all the elements that accompany it—then we realize two distinct and "subtle" impressions. These impressions seem to arise from within, and unlike what happens with the sensible aspect of perception, they cannot be projected outside as qualities inherent to the object, but rather have a life of their own.

This detachment from the sensory impressions *in* the sensory impressions (the separation of the "subtle" from the "dense," to use Hermetic terms, or of the "real" from the "unreal," to use Hindu terms) *is attained by experiencing our head to be removed from and above us, almost as if it were external to us.*[20] The ordinary sensation will fall through our center of consciousness and the other, corresponding one will take its place.

This discipline must be repeated methodically: through an intense concentration of progressive intensity and length, what will be slowly realized is an order of precise and directly recognizable *differences*. These differences correspond to those of the impressions and images derived from the senses, but are of a completely different nature, though they still have an *objective* character.

It is difficult to say more about it: only those who have had such an experience know how this renewed, reawakened mode of knowledge is accompanied by a sense of certainty and direct understanding, which is

20. This should be simultaneously connected to the "perception through the ears of the heart" mentioned by Luce in the previous chapter. This perception is *solar* and *pure*, as opposed to the reflective, lunar, and impure perception connected to the physical senses and to the brain. (Note by UR)

stronger and more complete than that which may be gained through any sensory impression.[21]

We can do the same with our thoughts, always through the exercise of distancing ourselves from our heads; then we will become increasingly capable of seizing our thought and using it, even before it begins to be articulated in its cerebral formulation. Here, too, we will come to perceive a new order of differences that replaces the habitual one. It is as if every thought corresponded to a special musical note of an infinite gamut of tonality, each one perfectly and directly recognizable. As a further confirmation, after the realization of a certain succession of note-thoughts, it is possible to return to our heads and to formulate in a discursive manner the corresponding order of thoughts, which *earlier on had not been experienced as thought.* However, sometimes one reaches such depths that verbalization is almost impossible, insofar as the field of experiences widens and its content no longer bears a relation to our normal life and to the problems that arise from it.

An analogous practice may take as object either the emotional contents of our consciousness or the various impulses. I do not want to dwell on this. The meaning is the same: it is a rapid and subtle attentiveness at the threshold of the Self, which catches and stops perceptions in midair, thus realizing a knowledge of the elements that replaces ordinary, provisory, gross, and sensual consciousness. I am not expounding here a methodical treatise on esotericism: rather, I am trying to rouse in some the memory of certain forms of inner activity that often manifest themselves in a sporadic and spontaneous way, and to shift attention to them so that they may be recognized and developed.

I would rather talk about the sense of self, which, on the basis of these forms of activity, replaces the bodily one.

The body itself seems distant, external to us, while the impressions that

21. We should note that what is presupposed here is that *purification of the heart,* expressed by the sign ☩, which was mentioned by Abraxas in this chapter. Without this, the sense of superior evidence and certainty may also be projected into a mere world of ghosts. Then one would go from the world of reality to a world of illusion to which one is enslaved and in which one becomes locked up, mistaking it for supreme Truth. The greater part of so-called contemporary clairvoyant literature, even when no mystifications are involved, should be judged in these terms. See also what Meyrink said in the previous chapter concerning the *world of ghosts.* (Note by UR)

are born from external objects in the way described seem to arise and live in us, as a part of us.

This is an *annulment of the sense of space;* what remains is an *activity of succession,* a different, inner, and rhythmical sense of time.

Once the relationship with our body is reestablished, we will feel *free and mobile* within it. This is the birth of the so-called *sense of the subtle body.*

Here lies a danger that causes most people to fall: it is necessary to avoid becoming ensnared in a *sense of happiness and greatness* (what William James called the "cosmic feeling" in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*) that darkens consciousness in the torpor of ecstasy. It is necessary to retain the sense of the Self and the active life of consciousness, which remains superior and distinct in the experience of the various modalities of subtle perception that I have described.

Thus any sense of satisfaction and pride throws us back into the body; the realization is then altered, and the vision dimmed.

The subtle body gives us *possession,* but the *voluptuousness* of possession is an attribute of the physical body and of the senses, with which they imprison us again in their domain.

Knowledge as Liberation

This item was introduced with the note "First translation for Ur *from the Sanskrit by Arthur Avalon." In the course of his contact with Julius Evola,*[22] *Avalon (pseudonym of Sir John Woodroffe) made available to the editors of* Ur *an English translation of the* Kulârnava-Tantra *that has remained unpublished to this day. In the Sanskrit edition of the work (Calcutta, 1916) for his series of "Tantrik Texts," Woodroffe notes that "there is in hand an English translation" that he intends to publish. However, later editions contain only an English summary by M. P. Pandit. The present text is, therefore, unavoidably, a translation from Sanskrit to English, to Italian, and back to English. All that can be claimed for it is that it closely reflects what the readers of* Ur *had before them* (Editor's note).

1. As the supreme Lord, the God of all gods, who is the highest bliss and the Master of the World, was sitting on the peak of Mount Kailasa, Parvati asked him:[23]

2. O Holy One, you are the Lord of all gods, the ruler of the five sacrificial rituals. You are omniscient and directly realized through Yoga. Be generous to those who seek refuge in you, O Lord of the Order [*Kula,* referring to the Tantric initiatic Order], supreme law, and Ocean of the nectar of grace.

4. 5. O Master, countless beings living in this contingent and frightful process of transformation experience all kinds of suffering as they are trapped in different bodies. They are born and die without ever attaining liberation. Alone in their suffering, none of them is happy. Tell me, O Lord, through what means they may be saved?

6. The Lord replied: Listen, O Goddess, to what I am going to expound

22. For more details on the contact between Evola and Avalon, see H. T. Hansen's introduction to J. Evola, *Men Among the Ruins,* Rochester, Vt.: Inner Traditions, 2001.

23. Tantras are mostly written in the form of dialogues between the personifications of the masculine principle (Shiva, the "Lord of the Mountain," or the Olympian principle) and the feminine principle (Shakti, Parvati) of the deity.

in reply to your question: understanding it frees a person from the process of becoming [*samsâra*].[24]

7. Shiva is omniscient and simple; he is the supreme Brahman and the creator of everything. Mâyâ does not affect him, as he is the Lord of all things. Alone and incomparable, he is Light itself. In him there is no change, no beginning, no end. He is without attributes, and higher than the highest being. He is Being, Consciousness, and Bliss: all beings are parts of him.

9.–11. All beings, plagued as they are by an ignorance that has no beginning, resemble sparks from a fire. Their action determines them, according to their qualities, in various names [i.e., in various ways of individuation]: whether good or evil, their actions bind them and are the source of all misery. Going from birth to birth, they attain that body, enjoying different ages, happiness or suffering, which is proper to their state and to the outcome of their works. O beloved, the causal body and the subtle body do not perish until liberation is attained.[25]

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24. The Lord does not answer the problem of liberation with a theory, but by indicating Shiva's *state*, which must be *known*, namely realized or actualized by one's consciousness through a congruous transformation. According to this Hindu teaching, man is Shiva himself: the problem is that he does not know it. His being a man or any other finite being is supported and actualized in a body only by this *ignorance (avidyâ)* or by believing to be other than Him *(dvaitabhâva)*. This is why the center of everything is *knowledge (vidyâ)*, in the sense of an inner awakening.

According to Hindu teachings, *ignorance* is connected to *karma* (understood here as *sakâmakarma* and *bahirmukhî*, namely as that action which is yearning, "looking out" or "looking at something else," or identifying with other things *(ahamkâra)*. *Knowledge* is the state of "being in oneself"; karma is this restless moving around, running about in a state of intoxication in function of this or that object, of this or that goal, which becomes the support and the justification of one's life. Since reality is *one*, the world of those who turn to "other" is a world of illusion *(mâyâ)*. Karma and *avidyâ* operate in a circle: from metaphysical ignorance proceeds the action in the above-mentioned sense. This action, in turn, confirms ignorance and the state of intoxication and blindness of all living beings. What ensues is a tighter net of bonds and dependencies, which pulls one into the current of becoming. Then one becomes stuck with this or that form of existence of the so-called "causal body," which consists of yearnings and preconscious and transcendental tendencies that the spirit identifies with out of ignorance. This being develops a certain bodily form through the "subtle body." The causal "body," as "karmic body," is therefore an obstacle to liberation: it is the "guardian of the threshold," a frightening phantasm who flees only with the rising of the Sun of Knowledge.

25. According to this tradition, both a "good" and an "evil" action create a bond. While the latter chains one to a lower form of existence, the former leads to a higher form, but

12. 13. The goal of all things, of both the motionless world as well as of all beings endowed with movement (creeping worms, swimming fishes, birds, beasts, people, virtuous and evil creatures, and even gods), is liberation. Having gone through myriad births in any of the four classes, as a consequence of some great merit, one is born as a man; only then can one become free through realization of Knowledge.[26]

15. 16. O Parvati, it is only through merit and great difficulties that one obtains the human condition after thousands of rebirths in this universe. Who is more guilty than one who, having reached this state so difficult to achieve, and which is the stepping-stone toward liberation, does not attempt to cross [the current of becoming]?

17. In truth, he is a murderer of his own self who, having reached such a privileged birth and being endowed with perfect senses, does not even cast his eyes over that which is good for him.

18. Without a body, the purposes of human existence cannot be achieved. Therefore, when you attain a precious body, operate in conformity with its purpose.

19. The body must be preserved with any means, since all things are included in it. Try to preserve it until it has realized the Truth.

22. That which the body requires due to its own nature needs to be given to it in view of the attainment of Knowledge. Knowledge will awaken the power of the yoga of contemplation *(dhyânayogashakti)* with which liberation can be easily obtained.[27]

23. If you do not preserve your own Self from what is evil, where will you find one who, loving it more than yourself, will help it across [the current of becoming]?

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neither to transcendence nor to freedom from any particular form. This freedom can be attained only by the state of Knowledge.

26. We should not understand the various "rebirths" in the way of the naive "reincarnationists." These are passages through various states of existence, of which the human is only one in particular. In the verses of the text, mention of "myriad rebirths" has mainly a symbolic value.

27. Tantrism is characterized by a valorization of the body rather than by its belittlement and mortification. The meaning of Tantric yoga lies in knowing and in dominating all the elements and powers found in the human body. According to initiatic teaching in general, a state of perfect harmony of body and soul, rather than one of contrast, struggle, and suffering, is likely to propitiate inner development.

24. 25. 27. Those who while in this life do not preserve themselves from what is proper to Hell—what are they going to do there where no help is to be found? Until this body lasts, do whatever helps you realize the Truth. Aim at what is best before evil overtakes you and before the dangers may surround you and the senses lose their keenness.[28]

35. Being dominated by Your *mâyâ*, O Parvati, [man] does not see despite having eyes, does not hear despite having ears, and does not understand despite knowing how to read.

36. This world sinks in the deep ocean of time, which is infested with the "sharks" of corruption, illness, and death. Unfortunately, very little Knowledge is acquired while beings are in it.[29]

41. O Beloved, death strikes man as he thinks: "This was not done," or "This was done," or "This still needs to be done."

42. Undertake tomorrow's work today and tonight's work this very morning. Death has no respect for any deed, whether it is accomplished or not.

46. Even the gods Brahma, Vishnu, and Mahesha, as well as other manifested beings, one day will cease to exist. Thus, work hard to attain your liberation.[30]

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28. Here we find a mention of the idea that those who aspire to "knowledge" must achieve it in this earthly life. Meyrink in the previous chapter wrote: "Those who do not learn *to see* on earth will certainly not learn in the "great *beyond*." The human "Self" draws its sense of self from the unity of the body. However, when the body collapses, the noninitiate experiences a sense of swooning until he passes on to another form of conditioned life. Consciousness may be preserved and endure after death only in proportion to what it has appropriated along the path of knowledge while in *this* life.

29. When the veil of Mâyâ is first removed, man has a terrifying experience. It is as if, being a sleepwalker, all of a sudden he was to wake up and realize he is on the edge of a bottomless pit. Then he perceives the whole world as a vertiginous falling, lacking any fixed point. This is *mahâkâla*, the devouring power of time, the ocean of *samsâra* in which the world sinks with increasing speed. They are the "shuddering waters" (φρικτον υδωρ) treated in the Mithraic ritual that will be discussed in the next chapter and were already mentioned by Abraxas in chapter I. The corresponding generic designation is "samsâric consciousness."

30. From an initiatic point of view, the "gods" are powers that live in the conditioned world. Their existence may last cosmic aeons, but it is not eternal. The only immortal one is he who has achieved liberation. He subsists even in the great dissolution *(mahâpralaya)*, namely in the period in which the entire manifestation, due to the cyclical laws, is reabsorbed.

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KNOWLEDGE AS LIBERATION

55. Detachment is liberation. All evil comes from attachment. Thus, be detached and grounded in the Real; in this way you will obtain bliss. Even the [supreme] Knower is subject to decay because of attachment: what then should we expect from those who are only "little knowers"?[31]

58. As long as man in his thirst for pleasure creates bonds for himself, the darts of worry will pierce his heart.

66. Every day, alas, man is consumed by his senses, which are like thieves dwelling in his body, feeding on the objects of desire, deluding him in a constant yearning.

67. As the fish yearning for the bait does not see the hook, likewise a man who yearns for physical enjoyment is not aware of the suffering [that comes from falling in the hands of] the god of Hell.

69. Sleeping, copulating, eating, and other common similar functions are shared by all animals. Only man is fit for Knowledge. Those who lack it are like brutes.

72. Everybody is busy fulfilling the duties of his caste or of his stage of life *(âshrama)*. These fools, O Parvati, do not know the supreme Truth and will certainly perish.

73. Others, filled with ignorance, delude the masses by preaching the observance of rituals and sacrifices.

74. There are some who, being satisfied with mere words and ceremonies, remain perplexed amid rituals filled with invoking formulas.

75. They are ignorant, being deceived by Your *mâyâ*. They think they can attain liberation by eating only once a day, by fasting, or by practicing debilitating disciplines.[32]

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31. In these texts, "reality" is synonymous with "state of consciousness"—i.e., with nonduality.

32. We have already mentioned that this text unfolds in the form of a dialogue between Shiva and his bride, Parvati. The "bride" of the god personifies, among other things, his power of manifestation. According to the Tantra, the supreme deity has two aspects: a masculine, immutable aspect *(Shiva-shakti)*, and a feminine, changing, dynamic aspect *(mâyâ-shakti)*. Every manifestation is the result of the unleashing of mâyâ-shakti by Shiva-shakti. The difference between the state of being dependent and the liberated state is this: in the former, the mâyâ-shakti element dominates the Shiva element, while in the latter the Shiva element dominates the mâyâ-shakti element. The God dominates his mâyâ (which here does not mean "illusion," but rather the power from which manifestation arises),

76. What liberation can these fools possibly achieve by tormenting their bodies? Goddess, can a snake be killed by striking an anthill [that lies above its nest]?

77. This race of hypocrites goes about acting like wise men, deceiving people for lucrative purposes or out of vanity.

78. Avoid those who are given to the pleasures of this world as well as those who claim to know Brahman while remaining strangers to true practice and to Brahman.

86. Lady of the Order, all these [ascetic] practices only deceive man. An effective liberation can be attained only by the actual realization of Truth.

87. Beloved! The *pashus,* having fallen into the deep pit of the six philosophies *(darshanas),* are subject to various bonds and do not know what is the supreme object and the goal of life.[33]

88. Engaging in vain disputes, they float on the ocean of the Vedas and of other scriptures; caught in the waves of time, they are victims of the animals living in them.

89. Those who [claim they] know the Vedas, the Âgamas, and the Puranas, but do not know the supreme object, are impostors. Whatever they say about these texts resembles crowing.[34]

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while a "living being" or "particular being" *(jîva)* is dominated by it. In this sense Shiva says that the ignorant, or those who fret outside the path of true metaphysical Knowledge (which has nothing to do with ritualism or a misguided asceticism), are fooled by the mâyâ of his bride.

33. This is a wordplay, often found in Tantras, between *pasha* and *pashu. Pasha* means bond, and *pashu* animal. The latter is a term used in the Tantras to refer to any being burdened by instincts or even by moral and religious norms. Typical of the *kaula,* or Tantric initiate, is to become free from every type of bond or *pasha.*

34. In these passages, one of the essential points of esoteric teaching is confirmed also by Hinduism. One can read esoteric texts and undergo the toughest practices. Yet all this, in and by itself, achieves little. "The supreme Truth is in one direction, the work of man in another." It is necessary to posit a *principle;* only then can things, words, and signs speak and grant the inner being further clarifications. In this text mention is made of the *method of transmissions.* The name given to Shiva in the opening of the text is "Lord of the Kula." *Kula* literally means "noble family," but in this context it refers to the organization or Order of Tantric initiates and to their "chain." As in a body, in such organizations there is a *presence* or a state of transcendent consciousness of which each member partakes and which can be evoked at will. This state may also be *transfused* and

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90. The supreme Truth lies in one direction, but man's toil is in another—while the true meaning of scriptures affirms this, they interpret it in different ways.

91.–97. The fool does not know that Truth is in the Self, but is obsessed with scriptures. A purely verbal knowledge does not dissipate the anguish of becoming. Darkness is not pierced by merely saying: "Lightning."

98. Reading for those who are not awake resembles a blind person staring into a mirror. O Goddess, scriptures give knowledge of Truth only to those in whom Knowledge is already present.

104. Goddess, just as a man who is refreshed by drinking nectar refuses any other nourishment, likewise those who have realized Brahman have no need for any type of scriptures.

105. Liberation can be achieved not through studying the Vedas with a teacher, or through reading holy texts. O Beloved of the *vîras,* liberation can be attained through spiritual realization and nothing else.[35]

106. The observance of various duties and the devotion of the Ashrama does not lead to liberation; not even philosophy or scriptures are its cause. Its only cause is Knowledge.

107. Only the word of a Teacher imparts liberation; any teaching [based on mere theories] is misleading. Only a Teacher's word is life-giving; its efficacy is like a combustible [that relights a dormant fire].

108. The non-dualism proclaimed by Shiva is not related to ritualism or to other works; it is learned from the words of a Teacher, and not by reading ten millions treatises *(âgamas).*

110. Some yearn for monism, others for dualism. These people do not know my truth, which is beyond both monism and dualism.

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induced in others. It is on this basis that we should understand that "Truth can only be learned from the mouth of a Teacher and not from countless religious texts." That "word" of the Gurus regenerates, infuses liberation, creates life, *initiates.* The "presence" carried within Tantric communities *(kula)* is connected either to the Shiva or to the Shakti principle.

35. In Tantrism the *vîra* is a key figure.*Vîra* means "virile man" in an eminent sense, or heroic type. The path of Tantras is called *vîra-marga,* or path of heroes. Here *vîra* and *kaula* (a person belonging to an initiatory tantric community) are often synonymous. Thus, in Tantrism we can see a reconfirmation of that virile and affirming attitude that has been rendered in this book with the general term of "Magic."

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111. There are two paths: one leads to servitude, the other to liberation. Its principles are: "I am this" and "I am not this." Man is bonded by the former and liberated by the latter.[36]

112. This is the action that does not lead to servitude; this is the knowledge that leads to liberation. Every different action is only mania, any other kind of knowledge is mere exercise and a mechanical thing.

113. As long as desire continues to burn, as long as becoming is affirmed, as long as the senses have not been fixed, how can one speak of Reality and Truth?

114. As long as there is a push toward [extroverted] action; as long as the mind oscillates between all kinds of resolutions; as long as it has not been immobilized, how can one speak of Reality and Truth?

115. As long as the flesh prides itself and the feeling of "I am this" subsists; as long as one has not procured a Teacher, how can one speak of Reality and Truth?

116. Asceticism, vows, pilgrimages, repetitions of formulas, burnt offerings, worship, and things of this sort, including discussions of the Vedas, Âgamas, and other texts, may be helpful only as long as Reality and Truth are unknown.

117. Thus, O Goddess, those who strive to attain liberation must always, with any means and everywhere, hold firmly to Truth and Reality.

118. O Parvati, what is the use of all these words? Outside the law of the Kaulas there is no liberation. This is the truth, and it cannot be doubted.

120. Thus, O Goddess, man is easily freed from the bond of this terrifying transmigration, through the direct transmission of Truth by a Teacher.

121. [Thus,] O Beloved, I have briefly spoken on the origin of living beings and of their ways.

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36. The way to liberation has as its principle: *"I am not this."* What matters is to abolish, not in one's thought but in the deepest root of existence, the so-called *ahamkâra,* namely the evidence expressed in this thought: "I am this being, determined in such and such a way: that which this being is, I am also." I have already suggested that the first and necessary operation of the Ars Regia (Royal Art) consists in the *disidentification* or in the extraction *(separatio)* of "gold" from the "stone."

Abraxas

The Hermetic Caduceus and the Mirror

Every teaching of ours is illusory until it is translated into a *practice* and an *action*. You will therefore be taught the directions for the first operations, of which you know from what I have said before.

First, you need to become the master of a part of your life, or at least of your day, in order to firmly and actively establish a new quality—thus:

Become innerly detached from yourself and from what surrounds you; maintain a sober, effortless, neutral, and well-balanced lifestyle, without excesses. Sleep only as needed and eat little.

Let your body be whole, calm, harmonized. Temper your soul with the power that is in you; cleanse it from impulsiveness, passions, restlessness, and then stabilize it and amalgamate it with your body.

Other beings do not exist. Do not let their actions, thoughts, or judgments affect you, no matter what they are.

Make sure that nothing will secretly creep into you: watch over everything that comes from the outside and that emerges from the unexplored depths of your consciousness. Observe all things in silence with your mind and remain unperturbed, stopping every judgment with a firm hand.

If passions bother you, do not react or become perturbed. Bring them deliberately to satisfaction, and then get rid of them.

Grow in this direction until you are able to realize the frivolity, uselessness, and the *threat* of every thought, so that your mind, too, may slowly calm down and silently crouch at your feet.

In this way you can slowly build up a strength inside you, similar to a lord whose glance instills silence, respect, or confusion in the servants around him. *This* is *our Gold*: ☉.

When you will do this with a subtle, constant, strong, and gentle art; when the equilibrated and neutral state in you has finally become a continuous

and natural thing—then you will feel connected again to yourself, enjoying a sense of interiority such as you have never experienced before. At this point you will experience a propensity to rest in yourself, and from this calm and enlightened rest, a sense of spiritual and free contentment will ensue.

Observe this sensation and retain it. When you will possess it entirely (through an inner act that I cannot tell you about, since you will learn it only after you have *invented* it), try to connect it with the body so that it may pervade it as warmth pervades water; in the end, of the two, only *one thing, one state* will result.

This is the *fluidic state.*

This operation in our Tradition is called "*the first extraction of Mercury* (or of Hermes ☿) *from the Mine.*"

Let your consciousness hold on to this state, with a calm firmness. Let it go, then evoke it again repeatedly; study it, *learn* it until you feel it as a *reality* awaiting in the subconscious, ready to emerge at your command. When you have conquered this point, you can be sure you have progressed far enough.

You will be instructed about the various properties of the *fluidic body* only in relation to the various operations, the first one of which I am about to reveal to you. Know that every sexual encounter that is dominated by the thirst for pleasure paralyzes it, makes it weak and languid—especially in people with nervous temperaments. Know that the fluidic body is energized by a vegetarian diet,[37] fasting, and even magical aromas, as is hinted in one of its names ("aromatic body") and in one its particular aspects (the "vampiric"). Know that every sudden loss of equilibrium or strong emotion that occurs when consciousness is in relationship with it may cause serious harm, in both the body and the psyche. Know that its virtues must be sharpened through a special discipline.

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37. According to an occult law, *every energy of a being that is not being actualized in that being constitutes a burden and an impediment in every initiatic operation.* In human beings there are particular forces of organization, which absorb and transform the food. As we move from the mineral to the human domain we find an increasingly organized matter. By eating vegetables we unleash forces that would not be manifested by eating meat, since in animal material the effort of organization in regard to the vegetable world is already resolved. This is how vegetable food propitiates a higher degree of fluidic presence and dynamism. Moreover, we can avoid the danger of certain psychic infections that can be positively resolved only by applying the inner fire in a special work of transformation, aimed at turning the "poisons" into "vital juices." (Note by UR)

Let me give you an elementary hint about it, so that you may understand the sense of the initiatic education of your feelings.

You should not destroy feelings, but rather destroy your stubborn clinging to them, namely pleasure, desire, aversion, and anguish. Purify yourself from such dregs; become free from the *bond of the heart;* be open, free from fears and pettiness in your feelings. In the way deep, clear, still water reveals what is at the bottom, likewise no longer identify yourself with your feelings, but rather receive them and observe them as you would external things. Let this thought be born in you: "Just as I *am* not the food I taste, likewise I am not the feelings that I allow to echo freely in me: they are not *mine,* they are not *me.*"

Only then will feelings be able to *speak to you*—when you cease to be lost in them and concerned only with enjoying or suffering. They will reveal to you a new organ of sense beyond the animal ones, as "objective" as they are, though oriented to a more subtle aspect of reality. Educate this new sense with inner attention, focusing on the *ear of the heart:* make it as refined as you can. At the center of yourself, like a spider that keeps under control all the strings of its web and their vibrations, let there be a calm self-control and a scrutinizing lucidity, purified and fearless, open to every voice.

This education of the heart, which you will operate through "persuasion," with a slow and gentle "fire," will eventually infuse a supersensible power of knowledge into your fluidic body. This education realizes a "distilled water," a transparent water consecrated in the sign of your neutrality that dominates it: ⚷[38]

Having done that, attempt the liberation of the central power ⊙ and the encounter with the Serpent. This happens when the consciousness of your "Self" is able to transfer itself into the seat of the fluidic body, and when the latter is detached from the animal senses and consequently isolated from the physical world.

There are several techniques that can be employed. Scorn the cautiousness of the petty methods of "meditation," which can rarely free you—truly,

38. The Catholic Church has various symbols susceptible of having an esoteric meaning. For instance, when the "heart" that Jesus "carries in the palm of his hand," surmounted by a cross and surrounded by flames, is slightly altered, we have precisely the ⚷, an alchemical sign that has the above-mentioned meaning. Its "flames" are connected to the "ignition of the Astral Light," which has a far different meaning from the one supposed by its devotees.

not just in your imagination—from the quagmire of mental forms and the prison of the brain. Employ instead direct techniques. Use the *"Mirror."*

In order to isolate the fluidic body, it is necessary to first neutralize and deactivate the sensitivity of the physical body. The "Mirror" technique acts on the optical nerve and fatigues it, until the power concentrated in the act of staring is freed from the physical organ and actualized in the fluidic light.[39]

Proceed as follows. Find a clean room, preferably outside the frantic atmosphere of big cities, in the countryside, or in a place where silence rules and nothing can possibly distract you. Seal yourself off from everything that is outside of you. Dry and clear nights are preferred. Do not wear clothes that are too tight, or engage in practice with a full stomach. Open the windows, burn some myrrh, and then sit before a mirror.

Having made up your mind, repeatedly and persuasively evoke the fluid state that the slow and deep inspiration of the myrrh in the air will make more lively; join it closely to a sense of yourself as a "presence" and impassible superiority fit for command.[40] Then *stare* at the mirror.

The mirror can be of crystal, steel, copper, or bronze; it should be concave so as to collect the light of a lamp in a central point. The lamp ought to be positioned in such a way as to remain hidden from sight and to cast a dim light around you except for the mirror.[41] Stare at the central point of light in the mirror, without blinking, until everything is phased out. Keep at it. This point will turn into a black hole. The black hole will first grow into a bluish spot, then into a faint aura, and finally into a milky white one. Soon enough this whiteness will produce a rapid expansion of a fresh and bright light.

This is the threshold of the supersensible, and the first contact with the "Astral Light," in which the subsistent nucleus is freed, in principle, from the conditions burdening the incarnated beings that dwell at the bottom of the "waters."

As I said, *stare at it.* This is both all and nothing. "Staring" is a verb that encompasses a long search, an uncertain path built with the secret art of a

39. This is the same goal of the yoga technique called *pratayara,* which consists in staring at a certain part of one's body or at an external object. (Note by UR)

40. This is more organically and directly effected if one succeeds in *transferring one's sense of Self into the heart,* as was described in the preceding chapter. (Note by UR)

41. Some useful technical details on the construction and employment of magic mirrors can be found in P. B. Randolph, *Magia sexualis* (Paris, 1952), pp. 133–215.

careful, subtle, and prudent dosage, combining and equilibrating the active and the passive, the sensitive and the determinative elements of the soul. I can be of little help here. You must open the way by yourself and walk with your own feet.

Let your staring be effortless, without apparent will (like fire under the ashes), as if you were about to gently fall asleep. Stare at it and then abandon your gaze, try not to think about it anymore; forget about it. Sight is the starting point, but in reality your whole soul will be active in the operation, and its fixed staring is only a means to fix itself.

Intensify this abandonment by *loving it,* agreeing with it, tempering it with a sweet persistence, until it becomes a *continuous* thing that no longer seeks to resist you, when you push it even deeper. On the other hand, you must resist a presence that is subtle and not subjected to you—namely yourself as a *simple* point that fear cannot halt and that knows how to retain and preserve itself. This presence does not obstruct the direction of your abandonment, riding it instead, not becoming dissolved during the various phases, but rising up again with the unexpected experience of a greater simplicity, strength, and transparency. What occurs here is an initial convergence of Sulfur and Mercury, of Sun and Moon; you must know the work as the first *preparation of the Caduceus of Hermes.*

The obstacles—aside from those that occur at the end of the operation—consist in the excessive or unbalanced mixture of the mercurial and sulfuric elements. I have said that the preparation should make the bodily nature calm, pliant, and harmonious, under your control. You must now take this nature gently and lead it to the operation without alerting it. If you are impatient and clumsy, employing excessive force, the bodily nature will react, and free itself of you; in an instant, you will be thrown back to the starting point. At first these instinctive reactions are unavoidable, but they should not discourage you. Try again, with a new spirit, at the same hour, and subtly insist, as Eliphas Levi says, like "the wave that ever returns and eventually carves even iron."

The reactions and instinctive alarms of your body will be followed by those of the spirit if the latter is not strengthened enough. You will experience a sort of fainting, the sense of the ground giving way; you will shudder and rapidly react and thus find yourself back at the starting point.[42]

The way will remain closed until you awaken in yourself an even faster readiness, with which you will suddenly stop the reaction before it suspends the fluidic detachment.

The opposite defect consists in the possibility of *abandoning oneself to abandonment,* thus dissolving self-awareness. This would lower the world of magicians to the *world of mediums and of visionaries,* the world of the *supersensible* to the world of the *subsensible.* In the *medium,* the center is dissolved and his consciousness slips down, becomes immersed in the body, becoming the body's own consciousness. A medium is fully dependent on the body; what he experiences are emergences and "projections" of the turbid tendencies and the elementary forces enclosed in his organism. The sign of this perversion and abortion of the operation is a sense of *deadly tiredness* that will overtake you as soon as you return to the normal state, since other forces will have fed on your strength.

To create an ever more decisive preponderance of the intellectual center over the peripheral sensibility that is in contact with the external world, and also over the organic and subconscious elements—such is the work of the "preparation" mentioned at the start of this essay. This preponderance leads to the already mentioned state = ⊙, where the mind joins itself and realizes the experience of independence, subsistence, and superiority in regard to everything that is bodily and animal. When the detachment of the fluidic body occurs, through your fixing that is made continuous and boldly intensified in the inner direction, one support is taken from you; you must remain absolutely steady in this pure, immaterial, extra-cerebral state of mind and of the "Self." If you are not up to it, the mediumistic and sleepwalking state sets in, in which the liberated fluidic body lacks a nucleus, thus becoming a passive instrument of the inferior world.

However, if you actively go beyond the neutral point, you will realize the "*Rebirth in the Mind*" in the "*Magnesium of the Wise*" (the Elixir). From

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42. The reader should note the analogy with those sudden *jumps* that often occur without apparent reason before falling asleep; during sleep a natural, unconscious, involuntary separation of the fluidic body occurs, followed by a state of passivity of the Self before the forces to which it owes its existence and which replace it during sleep. To those who *understand,* this analogy can already supply the directives for a second method. We may recall that in a previous chapter Meyrink has specifically said that the secret consists in *becoming aware of the "form" of one's Self, of one's "skin,"* while sunk in sleep, or better, at the *moment* of falling asleep. (Note by UR)

the golden nucleus of your perfected, concentrated, and one mind = 1, an *intellectual light* will break forth, in which you will realize a new, powerful, transformed sense of Self. *You will be able to see. You will be awake.*

Philalethes says (*Introitus,* ch. I and XIII): "Through *our gold* (☉ = the Sun, which is the awakened nucleus made from the preparation) the same occurs (as through the seed); at first it is dead, or rather its enlivening virtue is hidden beneath the thick husk of its body. . . . As soon as it is bathed with *our water* (which is 3, the fluidic), it is reborn, regains life, and becomes the *Gold of the Philosophers*. . . . The *fixed* = ☉ becomes *volatile* for a time, so that it may inherit a nobler quality that then serves to *fix the volatile.*"

With this experience your "Self" abandons the animal vehicle, which is enslaved to the "waters," and assumes a fluidic body (or "body of air") as an organ for action, with which and through adequate determinations it can operate multiple and miraculous works. And if, due to the reassumption of the animal body, you were to encounter difficulties, remember: the method is to evoke the image and to *will it.*

For the magician it is imperative to escape in any possible way from the atmosphere of enslavement and intoxication that is the "soul of the earth"; to enter in a conscious contact with the world beyond, and to act from there, directing corresponding reactions and effects in real life. His spirit, according to Kremmerz, is like a flame that goes up and down: he knows how to rise to the surface of the current of the "waters" where, being consecrated in "air," he is virtually empowered to subject all the beings that depend on this current, which now appears as the very "Astral Light" itself.[43]

I have shown you a way. Try what I have said before thinking of any other operations. Do not believe that the task is easy and without dangers; also, do not expect anything from the initial attempts. If you persevere and master your doubts, you will succeed. Dare and *be silent.*

The strongest force is the will of man who *knows* what he wants. Set the goal, then, and never change it. After you have started never, ever quit, no matter what, because, as I have told you before, the path of Magic does not have "dead corners." One does not have to embark upon it, but once you have done so, there are only two alternatives: succeed or perish.

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43. From these teachings, among other things, we can see the sense of the symbols of the "bird," the animal that "lives in the air," and of the "fish," the animal that freely moves in the "waters."

Luce

Opus Magicum:

The "Words of Power" and the Characters of Beings

Those who have been involved in magic, whether out of simple curiosity or due to an earnest desire to know, or in order to acquire the fabled *powers,* have been dumbfounded when, in the course of rituals, they have come across formulas containing either words that look totally unintelligible, or geometrical and nongeometrical signs called "characters" or "seals" of "spirits," the use of which is suggested without an apparent reason being given.

I have already mentioned this briefly elsewhere, when writing about magical herbs, giving some significant elements.[44]

It is opportune to note that almost all the words of the rituals are *nomina barbara* (barbaric names)—i.e., words from other languages (Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Chaldean, Egyptian), badly transcribed, and then further distorted by ignorant scribes and even *authors.*[45] Thus, in order to recover their exact meaning, it would suffice to transcribe them back into their original language, which almost always reveals particular attributes of the supreme being. For instance, the common rendering *Eye Seraye* would be better transcribed as *Eièh ascèr Eièh,* which is one of the "divine names" found in Exodus 3:14, where God himself answers Moses from the burning bush, revealing his name:

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44. See the journal *Ignis,* 1925, pp. 338–339.

45. A classic example of widespread ignorance is the mistake found in Matthew 26:46 and in Mark 15:34, which report Jesus' last words: "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" (Mark has the variation "Eloi" maybe because in Greek the diphthong *oi* was pronounced "i"). In twenty centuries nobody realized that *sabachthani* does not exist in any living or dead language. This speaks volumes for the great wisdom of those who transcribed the Hebrew word *nasavtani,* in an almost identical phrase found in Psalm 22:2, meaning: "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" (Hebrew: *A.L.I. A.L.I. L.M.H. 'S.V.T.N.I.*)

Those who are interested in the divagations made around the "name of Jesus" are referred to the learned study of S. Savini in *Ignis,* 1925, pp. 144ff.

A.H.I.H. À.SC.R. A.H.I.H.

According to one of the many interpretations, these words mean: "I Am He Who Is."

In other cases it is opportune, as Trithemius suggests, to transcribe the words in Chaldean characters, since they sometimes have a meaning in the Chaldean language that was employed by the priests of a people who belong among the first and main founders of the Mediterranean Tradition. Moreover, in the texts we find words that cannot be reduced to a particular meaning, either because they consist only of vowels or only of consonants, or of combinations of vowels and consonants that do not lend themselves to any possible interpretation or philological derivation. These are the real *"words of power."*

The words of power—as they were called in Egypt—had various names among different peoples and schools or orders that employed them. The Greeks called them ἄσημα ὀνόματα. The first term may indicate not only that such *names* are *unintelligible* and obscure, but also that they are unknown and misunderstood by the profane. The expression may also mean that they are *names without a sign,* in other words, names the profound sound of which can be uttered or perceived only in a sudden illumination of the spirit freed from any physical bond. Their existence, however, is attested in various forms of the Tradition. They have been transmitted as *magical sounds, nomina arcana* (secret names); in particular, the combinations and permutations of vowels were called *voces misticae* (secret sounds) or *mystical syllables.* The Greeks called them λόγοι σπερματικοί, or "causal words"; in the Hindu tradition they were known as "mantra," or natural names, meaning that these words belong to the original and perfect language, in the correspondence between the term containing the essence of the thing and the thing being signified.

Despite the fact that realization of the words of power unfolds on an eminently practical plane where it is preferable to remain free from any theory or presupposition, I will now briefly discuss the doctrinal aspects that refer to them.

In the highest potency, the Word realizes itself fully and perfectly because it contains in itself the principle of every manifestation, actualizing itself in it with a linear correspondence between the realizing will and the realized being.

The word is the means of realization and may also be made humanly perceptible, by bringing it to an octave that humans can hear.

That the *word* is such a means is indicated by the analogical law, observing how every manifestation originates from a center of power that acts by *transmitting* its energy in particularly wide and frequent *waves*. These waves may be perceived as *sounds*.

By analogy it is possible to intuit the law of formation of the characters of beings, recalling the hieroglyphics that Lissajous obtained through tuning forks, and the bizarre figures that Chladni obtained by vibrating thin plates covered with very fine sand.

The word, therefore, is not only a sound, but also a form. Thus for every being there is a corresponding name and character, or *signature,* which is proper to it alone and not to any other.

The traditional elements of this doctrine are preserved in the *Sepher Jetzirah,* the most famous Kabbalist text, in which the resonant concept is turned into a luminous concept, and the *nomina arcana* and the *signatura rerum* (the characters of things) are called *names of light* or *letters of light.*

Descend into "Silence" (see chapter I) and, having realized it, try to experience your own body and especially your imaginative faculties as functions of the self, detached from the deep reality of being, though not free, but rather as completely dominated.

This act of the spirit should reach such a perfection that when it is actualized, it should not even slightly affect the state of "silence"; thus this act should not cause the spirit to regress to a more normal and more material level of consciousness.

In this first phase you need to proceed gradually, investing first your body, as physical; then the mind, as thought; then the imagination, which is the highest and least-known faculty of creating images, so extremely important in magical practice.

It is obvious that what I am saying cannot and should not be attempted without first being absolutely perfect in the ritual I have described above. This is for two reasons: first of all *no result would be obtained,* except wasting time and possibly experiencing some psychic shock. Second, because

in the still formless previous operation some elements would prevail that would compromise the accomplishment of the earlier ones. It is necessary to be among those perfect ones before attempting the first phase of this ritual, which, again, requires much perseverance before being mastered.

In the second phase, as you are able to *live* your own imagination as a pliable instrument, create the image of any being, *grasp* it, and *plunge* it into the spirit. Then you will hear a sound that no *mortal* ear is allowed to hear, which is the secret name of the thing. At the same time, without physical eyes, you will "see" a slight luminous trace where the being has been *placed,* designating its *character.*

Having done this, *dissolve* the image and emerge from the "silence."

This can be done for the whole infinity of things.

In the operations of Ceremonial Magic the same results can be achieved by adequately "coagulating" the form being projected and by invoking the supreme *intelligences* with the proper formulas. Thus, the occult name will vibrate so intensely as to be heard even by those present; the character will reveal itself by tracing great fiery lines.

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Pietro Negri

Knowledge of the Symbol

According to Dante (*Convivium,* II, 1), "texts can be understood and expounded according to four senses": the *literal* sense; the *allegorical* sense, which, Dante says, "is a truth concealed behind a beautiful lie"; the *moral* sense; and the *anagogical* sense. This anagogical sense occurs when "reading in a spiritual way a scriptural passage, which in its literal meaning and in the things being signified points toward the things of eternal glory"; in other words, it is the innermost meaning of a text that, even when it has a literal sense, deals with topics of a spiritual nature. This latter sense must be clearly distinguished from the allegorical and moral senses, which in comparison with the anagogical sense, at least from a spiritual point of view, have a secondary importance. In my opinion, the anagogical interpretation of the *Divine Comedy* still needs to be undertaken.

Dante calls this anagogical sense "super-sense." ἀν–αγωγή (an-agogy) means "to lead" or "to carry upwards," or "to elevate." Moreover, when employed as a technical naval term, it designates the act of weighing anchor and sailing away. Metaphorically speaking, when it is referred to spiritual topics, anagogy therefore indicates spiritual elevation or a rising up from the earth. In the symbolism of "navigators," it designates leaving that "earth" or *terra firma* to which human beings are tenaciously anchored, in order to hoist the sails and to find a strong current, heading toward the open sea.

Dante was referring to the writings of "poets," although the distinction of the four senses may undoubtedly be applied to sacred and initiatic writings and to any means of expression and representation of spiritual facts and doctrines. According to this distinction, the *"super-sense"* in every type of symbolism is always the anagogical sense. The full understanding of symbols consists in the perception of the anagogical sense concealed in them; if anagogically understood and employed, they may even contribute to spiritual elevation. In this sense, symbols are endowed with an anagogic *virtue.*

Naturally, not all symbols are endowed with such virtue. By extension,

sometimes the name "symbols" is given to mere characters and emblems that have almost exclusively the value of representation. Thus the symbols of mathematics and chemistry do not possess, as such, this anagogic virtue. It is possible in these domains to attribute the same sense to very different symbols. For instance, algebraic multiplication may indifferently be indicated with the symbol of a cross or a dot. But the word "symbol," in its more proper meaning, has a very precise and complex meaning, as we can easily see from its etymological analysis.

In Greek, the term συμ–βολή (sym-bolé) designates the act of joining, putting together; the related term σύμ–βολον (sym-bolon) indicates agreement, and thus the *sign,* or mark. Both of these words consist of two elements: first the prefix σύν (syn; in Latin *cum*) merely indicates conjunction, while the latter designates and specifies the character of this conjunction. Βολή (bolé) and βόλος (bolos) indicate the act of throwing. They are terms connected to the verb βάλλω (ballo), meaning "to throw," "to strike," "to cast." The verb συμ–βάλλω (sym-ballo; "to reunite") and the analogous term σύμ–βολον (sym-bolon; "symbol") designate the *act* of reunion, while the synthesis (σύν–θεσις [syn-thesis; in Latin *compositio*]) indicates the *result* of this action. The dynamic character of the symbol is opposed to the static, immanent character of the synthesis. In regard to the effect of the action, the verb συμ–βάλλω (sym-ballo; "to reunite") is opposed to the verb δια–βάλλω (dia-ballo; "to separate, to oppose"); correspondingly, the σύμβολον (symbolon) is the opposite of the "devil" (διά–βολος [dia-bolos; "transversal, adversary"]). The attribution of dynamic and magical virtues to symbols in order to overcome diabolical opposition and adversities is philologically obvious. And just as the symbol leads to a synthesis, its opposite, the "devil," is what leads to the opposite of synthesis, namely to analysis: in fact, ἀνάλυσις (ana-lysis) is solution, breaking down, dissolution, death.

In a way, the dynamic virtue of symbols is opposed to every analysis, and it acts as the instrument and as the means of arriving at a synthesis. Just as in discursive knowledge one arrives at the thesis *conceptually,* in a logical way, starting from a hypothesis, likewise in the initiatic *endogeny* it is possible to arrive at a synthesis by employing the dynamic virtue of symbols, in a magical way, starting from the original human condition. These mere etymological considerations already allow us to see how in

higher knowledge symbols have a corresponding role to that played by concepts in discursive knowledge. The correspondence between symbols (σύνβολοι) on the one hand, and concepts *(con-ceptus, con-cipio)* and syllogisms (συν–λογίξοναι [syn-logixonai; "to com-pute"]), on the other hand, is a perfect one. In Logic, the syllogism unites the word (λόγος, logos) with the thought ([i.e., the act of "pondering," Latin *pensare*] from *pondus* = "weight"; to ponderate means to weigh), and leads in a discursive manner to consideration and to measurement (*mensura* from *mens,* mind, connected to *mensis,* month, and thus to the *moon,* which does not have its own light but a reflected one, or *reflection).* The symbol in the magical science or in the pure and purifying science of the Magi (Persian *majidan,* "purifying," through *fire)* works with the βολή (bolé), the irradiation, the projection, the fulguration. The *word* of logic corresponds to the operation, or to the *action* of magic, just as the "Great Work" of the Hermetic and Masonic tradition corresponds to the philosophical *discourse.*

Due to the very character of its composition, the symbol is different from and superior to the emblem, the insignia, the parable, the metaphor, and the allegory.

Emblem (from ἐν–βάλλω [en-ballo; "to throw in"]) and insignia have a representative rather than a noetic and spiritual character; the parable, the metaphor, and the allegory only partially possess the character of symbol. In the allegory something different is said (ἄλλο–ἀγορεύω [allo-agoreyò; "to speak other"]) rather than what is really meant. The literal sense is the "beautiful lie," and the true sense is another, possibly in contrast with the literal meaning. In the symbol there is no contrast or true difference between what appears at first sight and what is meant. Between the symbol and its meanings there is usually a relation of harmony, analogy, and correspondence. It is not a matter, as in the case of the allegory, of perceiving the true meaning without being misled by the apparent and irrelevant meaning, but rather (as far as mere comprehension is concerned) to go back from the evident meaning to the hidden ones, in order to understand the *full* meaning of the symbol, thus fulfilling (instead of overcoming) the initial meaning. Moreover, and properly so, the allegory is always

verbal; this limitation does not apply to symbols, since there are many types besides the verbal ones.

The parable too does not have the value of symbol. This word [from παραβολή (para-bolé) and παρα–βάλλω (para-ballò), "to put things next to each another")] is a mere comparison or similitude. Parables cannot lead beyond the term of comparison. Their successful employment by Menenius Agrippa and by Jesus shows that they are useful for plebeians and for the profane masses. As far as the metaphor and the *tropos* (metaphorical impression) are concerned, which are terms properly employed in rhetoric, we should note that they too refer to verbal expressions. They suggest that it is usually necessary to translate from concrete into abstract terms the meaning of words or phrases used in a metaphorical way. Metaphor (Latin *trans-latum,* "the carried over") means "to carry away" [μετα–φέρω (meta-ferò); Latin *trans-fero*] or "to transfer elsewhere."

Thus the allegory, the parable, and the metaphor are not, properly speaking, symbols: they are figures of speech that can deal with symbols, as they often do; in this case the characters of the argument, or of the symbol, are found, at least partially, even in the verbal expression used. In this case, on the basis of a symbol or a body of symbols, or special symbolism, one can construct an entire allegorical language; thus, sometimes even a jargon or a secret and conventional set of sentences are constructed.

I have mentioned that symbols come in a great variety of species. In practice, anything can constitute the basis of a symbol; however, there are obviously criteria for their being chosen or employed. Thus we have numerical symbolism, in which whole numbers (an abstraction per se) constitute symbols while their *powers* (Greek δυνάμεις), their residues, or roots (πυθμήν), their simple relationships and properties constitute symbolically their anagogical virtues. This symbolism was especially employed by the Pythagoreans, then by Kabbalists and Freemasons. We have the symbolism of the letters of the alphabet, which is obviously connected to the numerical symbolism that is at the basis of the Kabbalistic tradition. We can connect the geometrical symbolism of the Platonists and neo-Platonists to these symbols, and especially to the first one. Geometrical and numerical symbolism is connected to the symbolism of those sciences and sacred arts in which there are relationships, proportions, rhythm, and harmony, such as architecture, chants, music, dance, poetry, and painting

(together with the symbolism of colors, etc.). Heraldry and emblematics are the emanations, derivations, and applications of these symbols in the social and political domain. From physical phenomena come polar, solar, and meteorological symbolism, as well as the Hermetic symbolism of transformation. Biological phenomena provide the symbolism of fermentation, putrefaction, and germination of the vegetal seed, as well as sexual symbolism, the symbolism of metamorphosis and resurrection, and the symbolism of spiritual foods and beverages (e.g., the Hindu *soma;* the Mazdean *haoma;* the Hindu *amrita;* the Greek nectar and ambrosia; the ancient Latin *anna peremna;* the Judeo-Christian "bread" and "wine"). From the various forms of human activity come the regal symbolism (Philalethes' royal palace; the royal or regal neo-Platonic and Masonic art; *via regia; aqua regia;* the Hermeticists' royal wedding; the symbolism of war, especially the "holy war" *(Bhagavad Gita);* the symbolism of pastures found in both Hermes Trismegistus's *Pymander* and in the Gospels; the symbolism of cultivation of the "land" or Georgic symbolism; the symbolism of "navigation" (Homer, Virgil, Dante); the symbolism of the foundation of temples and cities and, in general, of "edification" (hence the title of "Pontifex" [builder of bridges] attributed to the Roman High Priest) and of "construction," which is the foundation of traditional Masonic symbolism, naturally connected with architectural symbolism (hence the "Great Architect of the Universe"); the symbolism of custody and defense of sacred objects, temples, and lands (Knights of the Grail and Knights Templar). Finally, some historical and legendary events, at both an individual and a collective level, may become the basis of and serve as symbolism (e.g., the Trojan War; Hercules' labors; the Argonauts' expedition; the life of Jesus). Myths [μῦθος (mythos = "what is spoken"; Latin *tra-ditio* = tradition, custom)] and fable (*fabulare,* to speak) are just stories; mythology is the story of gods and heroes. Myths are not symbols, but can have a symbolic character and become the basis of a certain symbolism. Thus, pagan mythology has supplied several symbols to Hermeticists, such as Michael Maier and Pernety. What I have presented here is a summary and incomplete list, though it should suffice to give the reader an idea of the breadth and variety of symbolism.

For those reasons, verbal expression, even in its figurative forms, cannot compete with the vital, synthetic nature of symbols. The symbol transcends words, and even when we consider it merely as a means to express and communicate facts and doctrines, it still has one more advantage over language; words vary in time and space, and they are liable to become worn out and undergo variations both in form and meaning and cannot achieve the stability and universality of symbols.

Nevertheless, word and symbol share a fundamental trait, namely the metaphorical nature that ties their concrete value to their abstract meaning. Both presuppose the acknowledgment of a universal unity, correspondence, and analogy; thus they implicitly admit the human "similitude." I said "similitude" and not identity or equality; I admit as a postulate that beings, and especially human beings, are similar among themselves from both the inner and outer point of view, and that the senses and inner organs of different people resemble and are equivalent to each other, just as the physical senses and organs are. Having acknowledged this, our inner experience transcends our individuality, and it can be expressed in words and symbols that can be understood by those who have an analogous experience. Moreover, our inner experience can contribute to induce it in those who have not yet experienced it. This is what happens in ordinary language in regard to common human experiences; when we talk about light, sound, color, we presuppose not only that the sound of our words is perceived by those who listen to us (just as we are able to perceive the sounds that meet our ear), but also that our experience, expressed through our words, is understood by those who hear it, thanks to the comparison with a similar experience, known by and shared with those who are listening.

Universal analogy is at the basis of symbolism and also at the basis of metaphorical language; therefore it is likely that symbolism conforms to determinate norms, just as the shift from the concrete to the abstract sense obeys the rules of semantics. The "Emerald Tablet," attributed by the Hermetic tradition to Hermes Trismegistus,[46] begins with the solemn affirma-

46. The text of the "Emerald Tablet" was presented first by Jâbir ibn Fayyân (Geber), who claimed to have received it from the Pythagorean Apollonius of Tyana. (See E. J. Holmyard, "Chemistry in Islam," *Scientia,* I/11 [1926]). According to Hermetic tradition, quoted by Albertus Magnus *(De alchemia),* the *Tabûla Zaradi* was found by Alexander the

tion of this connection and universal analogy: "*Verum sine mendacio, certum et verisimum: quod est inferius est sicut quod est superius; et quod est superius est sicut quod est inferius, ad perpetranda miracula rei unius.*" (True, without falsehood, certain and most true: what is below is like that which is above; and what is above is like that which is below, for the accomplishment of the miracle of the one thing.)

There is an analogy between the physical and the metaphysical, between exteriority and interiority, and between man and cosmos. Because of this, man is potentially God, and the microcosm is potentially a macrocosm. God, the Bible says, created man in his own image and likeness. The analogical relationship that connects one thing to another makes from each thing the natural symbol of things corresponding to it; hence the concept and the use made in magic of the "*signaturae rerum*" (signatures of things). The similarity between the thing and its symbol, between the object and its image, may be direct or inverse. In the first case the relationship is similar to that existing between a note and its octaves; one ascends from the symbol to what is signified through an anagogical transposition. In the second case, the relationship is similar to that existing between an object and its reflected image; one ascends from the symbol to what is being represented through reflection and inversion. It is necessary to take this factor into account when interpreting symbols. The two similitudes, moreover, are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Thus the solar light, refracting and reflecting itself in droplets of water, gives rise to the phenomenon of two concentric rainbows, in which the colors of the spectrum appear to be arranged in an inverted manner. Descartes's theory explains the formation of the inner rainbow as the simple reflection of the ray of light, and that of the concentric external rainbow as a double reflection. Analogously, a double inversion or one repeated an equal number of times brings back the second type of symbols to the type of mere transposition. Conversely, one might think that in the symbols in which the correspondence occurs through transposition, the inversion of the symbol is not perceived simply

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Great in the sepulcher of Hermes. According to this tradition, after the "Flood" Hermes found the tablets that the ancient wise men and Enoch had chiseled prior to and in view of the deluge, in order to perpetuate the tradition. The Masonic tradition attributes the discovery of these tablets to Hermes and Pythagoras.

because it is repeated an even number of times. The meteorological phenomenon of the rainbow, due to the dispersion of the "solar" ray into the "waters," thus has the value of a natural symbol of the process of universal analogy itself. Just as in pagan mythology Iris was the messenger of the gods, the special envoy of Jupiter and Juno, because the rainbow was the symbol of the union between heaven and earth, likewise the similitude between the procedure of the analogical inversion and the procedure of inversion in the optical reflection indicates in the analogy the connection uniting heaven and earth, spirit and matter, interiority and exteriority, the divine and the human.

The analogical character intrinsic in the symbol confers on it an ambiguity and an indetermination of meaning, which on the one hand makes it rich and fertile vis-à-vis the precision and the determination of the word, while on the other hand it makes its penetration and use less simple and easy. Even in words, the awareness of the etymological meaning and ties with related word-forms allows one to perceive their hidden meaning, and thus opens the way to a greater knowledge. But in the case of symbols, the analogous process presents a very different breadth and depth. The understanding of a meaning is the step toward the conquest of further meanings in collateral and higher domains. In this case, one is not forced to abandon the constant overcoming of the mystery of the ultimate roots of language, which is unavoidably present at the basis of every etymological analysis.

By virtue of constant meditation, the symbol ends up being imprinted on the mind, and with its constant presence it is always ready to inspire it, to suggest to it the analogical relationships that it has with what is, from time to time, the object of thought. Independent of references to various ideas, the symbol, on the basis of the analogical relationships contained in it and also due to its intrinsic syncretism, supplies the mind with elements to work on, and fertilizes it, so to speak, by bestowing a creative power upon it. In this sense, symbols constitute modes of motion and action, factors of endogenesis, that push, guide, and lead to conditions of consciousness not yet experienced, and thus to an effective, direct, *signi*ficant knowledge. From the hidden meaning found in the signs it is possible in

this way to ascend to conscious possession; thus what one gains through signs is also a practical teaching.[47]

This fecundating, magical action of the symbol over the mind corresponds perfectly to the similar action of symbols in politics and religion, as everybody can ascertain. Think of the waves of enthusiasm, the heroic determination that can be induced in individuals or in the masses through a hymn, a flag, a national or political symbol; think of the enthusiasm and fanaticism that a religious symbol can provoke, and you will understand how in Magic, too, the symbol can have a similar energizing virtue, a similar stimulating power, and the virtue of spiritual elevation. There is, however, an essential difference. In politics and religion the symbol appeals to love of country, to partisan spirit, to religious faith and prejudice, namely only to sentiment that the symbol stirs and manifests. But in esotericism, the symbol *never* appeals to sentiment, but rather to the mind and spirit's higher faculties of understanding and creativity. Sentiment, beliefs, theories, and any idea of adaptation or subordination to the masses are just human elements; it is a mistake to rely on them or to compromise with them when trying to rise above the mortal level and to ascend from the human to the divine. Magic, and with it all initiatic traditions, is perfectly coherent when it replaces the dogmatism of religious and philosophical faiths, or the mere representative verbalism of some sciences, with the symbolic teaching, or with the spiritual process that, with the help of symbols, makes inner experiences and conditions understandable, and thereby enables the direct perception and comprehension of transcendence.

This magical use of symbols is typical of Hermetism and of the rituals of some organizations that have been partially influenced by it. It grafts itself onto the practice of *ritual* that leads to the fulfillment of the *Work*.

The Hermetic tradition states that only *one* vessel is sufficient to complete the Work, or at most two (as apparently happened in Flamel's case).

47. The author makes an untranslatable play on words here in the original. The Italian word for teaching is *insegnamento,* which also literally can be read as *in-segna-mento,* "in-sign-ment." He then remarks, "It is very interesting, both historically and philologically, to note how language uses a word with such a meaning to characterize teaching." (Editor's note)

This vessel, the "Philosophers'" *athanor,* needs to be sealed hermetically, or, according to Hermetic ritual (the expression "hermetic sealing" has remained to this day to designate the corresponding chemical operation), in order to be able to operate *within* it, after isolating it from the outside. According to a well-known Hermetic saying, *"Visita interiora terrae, rectificando invenies occultam lapidem"* [Visit the interior of the earth. By rectification you will find the hidden stone] (Basil Valentinus, *Aurelia occulta philosophorum,* 2nd ed., 1613; it can also be found earlier in a slightly different form). The vessel, the *grasale* or chalice of the Holy Grail, is in fact of "earth"; but "earth," according to an archaic symbolism found in many languages, is the human body. Human beings (from *humus,* "earth") are earthly, terrestrial creatures; their body is molded with the mud of the earth (see the etymology of *Adam*), which is their dwelling place (see the German term *Boden,* "ground"; and the English terms *body* and *abode*). By visiting the inside of this vessel and by *rectifying* (another technical term retained in chemistry to designate the corresponding operation) one finds the "*Philosophers' Stone.*"

Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa (1401–1464) says (*Opera*, Basel, 1563, p. 632) that the master *descends* from Jerusalem to the rough mountains of the desert in order to cut and shape stones for the holy edifice (the place for beholding the gods), and that the soul, chosen as a bride for the son of God who dwells in immortality, adapts itself to the transformation *sicut lapides poliuntur* (as stones are polished)—that is, as the stones were smoothed that were to be employed in building the Temple of Jerusalem in which the theophany occurs. This *edifying* symbolism of Nicholas of Cusa corresponds precisely to later Masonic symbolism, in which the workers (the "fellows") polish the stones, square them, and form the *cubic stone,* or perfect stone, in the "inner chamber." Dante at the beginning of his *De vita nova* says: "*Truthfully,* I declare that the spirit of life resides in the most secret chamber of the heart." If the Hermetic vessel and earth are none other than the human organism, then the interior of the earth, the "heart" of the organism, can only be the heart. The heart is the sanctuary or *crypt* of the temple, portrayed as *beneath the ground* in the crypt of ancient temples. We can understand why an ancient anonymous French alchemist explained the name of the Saint Graal with the incorrect, though significant, etymology of *sang real,* or "royal blood." Such a connection of the vessel with the

heart can be traced all the way to ancient Egypt, since the ideogram of the heart is a vase with two *ear-shaped handles* (the *ears* of the heart); the similarity between heart and *athanor* is interesting, especially when we recall the Egyptian origin of the Hermetic tradition.

We have talked about the *descent* into the earth's interior. The symbol we have employed is so widespread as to go unnoticed. We know very well that our consciousness is not an object found *inside* the body; that there is no above or below; that it is absurd *to pray* to God, lifting one's head toward a hypothetical "heaven" and putting on the pitiful and beseeching expression of a dog waiting for his owner to hand him the leftovers (not without the vague fear of a kick). The sinking sensation of the consciousness in its innermost recesses cannot be expressed in human language other than by resorting to analogous sensations of material human life. The origin of many important and ancient symbols (if we can talk of origins), and thus of their interpretation, is to be found in the *need* to express inner sensations through analogy (an analogy that *really exists* and that the human mind can recognize and employ) between these sensations and the sensations of ordinary life. The entire symbolism of the "descent into hell" is connected to it. Thus, in Egypt, the *subterranean world,* the *neter khert,* the dwelling place of the dead, is called "Amenti," from the word *Amen,* meaning "invisible, occult." Thus, the Greek Hades is likewise αεισηδ, invisible. It is necessary to descend into this underground, invisible world, illumined by the hidden sun or *Amen-Ra,* the "Midnight Sun" of the Isaic initiation. This descent must be made without losing self-consciousness, without drinking or feeling the *lethal* effects of Lethe's waters. On the contrary, one should drink from the fresh source of Mnemosine, the giver of immortality in Orphism, or from Dante's waters of the river Eunoè. Mnemosine, memory, re-calling (from *corda*), who is opposed to Lethe and conquers him, is the *Mother of the Muses;* correspondingly, truth in Greek is *a-letheia,* and learning is none other, Platonically speaking, than an anamnesis, or a remembering.

Even the symbolism of the *stone*, the *occultum lapidem,* that is found by rectifying the interior (or *inferior,* as it is written in the later variations of

the Renaissance Hermeticist Basilius Valentinus, and now we can understand why), derives (though not chronologically) from an inner sensation. This at least appears very likely. Although an initial and uncertain sensation of sinking into the inner recesses of consciousness is easily accessible, in order to reach the sensation of "petrification" it usually needs a long period of assiduous practice of the ritual. An Italian text of the sixteenth century entitled *The Practice of Philosophical Ecstasy,* perhaps by Campanella, and published by D'Ancona alongside his work (Turin, 1854, vol. I, p. cccxxiii), says that at a certain stage of practice one becomes "as still as a plant or a stone." This confirms how spontaneous and exact the comparison of reaching such a condition is to the recovery of the stone. According to the Rosicrucian Michael Maier, the Philosophers' Stone is the very stone that Cybele forced Saturn to swallow, in order to save Jupiter, Saturn's own son, from his father's voracity; thus Jupiter was able to escape from time and become king of Olympus. The "black stone," a symbol of Cybele, was taken to Rome and preserved on the Palatine by the Romans, who had owned and venerated another *"lapis niger"* for centuries in the Forum, at the beginning of the "via sacra" (sacred road). This stone had fallen from the sky and was called *"abadir"* by the Romans and *"betyl"* by the Greeks. According to René Guénon (*Le roi du monde,* 1958, p. 76), the word *"betyl"* is the same as *"Beth-el,"* "house of God," which is the name given by Jacob to the *stone* that he used as a pillow when he saw the house of God and the gate of heaven in his famous dream. It was also the name given by Jacob to the city near the place where he had his dream. Interestingly, according to Genesis the original name of that city was *Luz.* But *luz* in Hebrew is the name of an *indestructible* little bone to which the soul is connected after death until the day of "resurrection." *Luz* is also the name of the almond tree. Near the city of Luz there was an almond tree, at the base of which there was a hole through which one could access an underground passage that led to the city of Luz, completely hidden. Thus we return to the symbol of the underground passage, which was associated with the symbol of the stone. The entire symbolism of the "spiritual building" employed in the Gospel and typical of Masonry, as well as the symbolism of the "Philosophers' Stone," is a development of this fundamental symbol that cannot be understood (nor taught) until the "hidden stone" has been found.

We have seen that we are dealing with a *lapis niger* (black stone). We could make further observations and comparisons concerning the importance of *black stones* in ancient Rome, in the Muslim tradition and in the tradition of *Agartha,* the subterranean world mentioned by Saint-Yves d'Alveydre in his *Mission de l'Inde,* by Ossendowski in his famous *Beasts, Men and Gods,* and by Guénon in his *Roi du monde.* The fact that this hidden stone, which can be found by descending to the "infernals" or in the "dark kingdoms" underneath and within the "earth," is necessarily black may simply seem the logical consequence in the development of this symbolism. However, if we recall how much it may be connected to the full flowering and fruitfulness of the symbolism, it seems to us that even this symbol may have a specific reference to the sensation of the Hermetic *black, blacker than black.* We should not forget that the "hidden stone" is the Stone of the Philosophers and not the philosophic stone: in other words, it is the matter employed in the work, and not the matter of the work's perfection; when the stone is found, the sensation of "petrification" goes together with the sensation of utter blackness.

Once this condition has been attained, the understanding of the symbol becomes effective; from it the sense of the further symbolism is illuminated, thus being able to suggest what needs to be done and to lead to a further phase in the work. The identification of the references and the determination of the symbol, besides, are not left only to the mind's eye. As one proceeds, the inner voice (the "voice of the heart") and the inner ear (the "ears of the heart") are activated. Thus, hermetically and literally, the transmission of the symbolism takes place. At certain times this voice answers a question that the mind asks about a given state or sensation; at other times it directly intervenes at the right moment and reveals a secret. Let us be clear about it: this is not the "voice of conscience," the "categorical imperative," or similar eruptions of what Nietzsche called "petty morality," nor mediumistic voices or phenomena. These are inner senses to which people usually pay no attention, since they are deafened by external noises and unable to perceive and to distinguish the subtle inner impressions. We can truly say with Jesus: "*oculos habent et non vident, aures et non*

audiunt" (They have eyes and see not, ears and hear not). This inner voice and hearing can work during both the waking state and sleep, as well as in the various stages of consciousness attained during the practice of the *rite*. Simultaneously with their action, sometimes real, tangible phenomena occur, such as to dispel any skepticism. These phenomena often possess a manifest symbolic character, and sometimes display an incomparable beauty and nobility. We could relate some examples, but we have hinted at this topic only in order to mention facts that are impossible to confuse with *ideas* or hallucinations, as one might be inclined to believe in the case of inner voices and perceptions; we have also hinted at this topic in order to suggest that the symbolic character extends to these manifestations as well. The symbolism is innate in them, too, so as to become a sort of universal or initiatic language, which finds one correspondence and expression in the initiatic language (through signs, gestures, or "universal words") employed by some organizations more or less connected to the initiatic tradition.

IV

Apathanatismos

(Deification)

Mithraic Ritual of the "Great Magical Papyrus of Paris"

Translated from the Greek by Luce
Introduction and commentary by Ea, Leo, Luce, P. Negri

Introduction

The text—presented here in the first Italian translation from the original Greek, and which we have compared with the German version by A. Dieterich (*Eine Mithrasliturgie,* Leipzig, 1903) and the English version by G. R. S. Mead (*A Mithraic Ritual,* London, Benares, 1907)—is found in the Great Magical Papyrus of Paris (No. 574 of the *Supplément grec de la Bibliothèque Nationale.* For variant readings, cf. Wessely in the *Jahresbericht des kk. Staatsgymnasiums Hernals,* 1899, p 12ff., as well as N. Novossadsky, *Ad papyrum magicum bibl. Parisinae nat. additiones paleographicae,* Petersburg, 1895).

In this text we have the *only* ritual of the ancient Mysteries that has been preserved in its entirety through the centuries, in a redaction dating to the beginning of the fourth century C.E. The tradition to which it is connected is essentially Mithraic, namely an adaptation of that ancient Aryan-Persian tradition which, for a while during the decline of ancient Rome, contended with Christianity for the spiritual legacy of the West. In the text, together with elements of Mithraic theurgy, we find intermingled elements of Egyptian-Gnostic magical traditions, particularly in reference to the many "names of power" that appear in it. This does not prevent the fact that, notwithstanding various strictly philological or historical considerations, the text represents a unity in which these various elements complete each other, for the *practical* realization of the ritual itself.

This Mithraic ritual has a very special meaning. It was not a ceremony attended by many people (hence, the inadequacy of the term "liturgy"

employed by Dieterich), but rather an individual operation aimed at the transformation of the deepest nature of man, and apparently reserved to those who had already gone through the lower degrees of initiation. The character of the ritual is not purely interior, nor magical in the sense of ordinary ceremonial magic. It is not purely interior, because, unlike the path of Hindu yoga and also what remains of Hermetic-alchemical symbolism, it does not deal with metaphysical states and meanings to be perceived *directly,* in their unspoken and formless essence. Rather, these meanings are first given as invocatory and ritual actions, then *projected* into magical images and visualizations. However, the context of ceremonial magic in the strict sense is transcended, since there is no exterior relationship with the apparitions. They are not exploited for some particular purpose, but rather everything converges toward a transcendent realization of the self. Therefore this has something intermediate: a common trait, after all, of everything that falls in the realm of *theurgy.* We also notice that the experiences described or indicated in the ritual do not seem to take place outside the body, nor in the ordinary bodily conditions, but rather in a *special state of fluidic intoxication* well known to those who practice magic, in which the contact established with the "Astral Light" and the consequent release from everything that comes from the animal senses do not prevent one from remaining in touch with the physical body and carrying out particular ritual actions. Thus, in the text, the references to the various apparitions are given together with *logoi*[48] (which are not necessarily pronounced only in the mind), and with real physical actions, such as closing the eyes, breathing, pressing one's abdomen, and so on. In this regard, it is interesting that the Mithraic ritual confirms that the science of breathing and of particular bodily postures *(asanas)* is not limited to Hindu Yoga, but was known even in the ancient Mysteries of the West, especially in Egypt, from which survives a text in hieroglyphics called the *Book of Breathing.* The same applies to the science and the use of "names of power," which correspond to the *mantras* and *bîjas* of the esoteric Hindu tradition. By closely following this Ritual, we can reconstruct the unfolding of the path followed by the Mithraic initiate.

48. "Invocations," plural of *logos.* (Editor's note)

First of all, it is necessary to become detached from the "law of the waters," from desire, or the burning, unending need that afflicts men who are tied to their inferior and mortal natures. In the first *logos,* the Mithraic initiate, just like the Orphic initiate, declares his own title of nobility—being *His* son, still mortal, but sanctified by the "Strong Strength of all Strengths" and by the "incorruptible Right Hand." He invokes his transcendent reality, namely his "Perfect Body." From the corruptible elements that constitute the animal nature, the invocation rises to their essence and to the primordial, heavenly, incorruptible elements. The operator resists and subsists: he holds firm and in "purity" fixes the power of his own soul beneath him. He then sets himself to unchain the force and to open the "mystical eye" to the transcendent vision. Having realized the moment of "purity," a contact is established through the breath with the element of air, in view of the first transformation: the *experience of Air* (a state of disembodied lightness) or of a *diffuse spiritual sensibility,* free from the bonds of the physical senses. The experience of Air is followed by the *experience of the Wind,* which is the principle that moves the supersensible ether and allows one to climb up to the causes, or to the initial hierarchy of "beings" or "Gods." Here the initiate holds his ground against the forces that attempt to sweep him away and resolves the tension caused by his appearance through the invocation of *Silence,* in other words, by putting himself in the state of calmness, the deeper being-in-oneself. When the vision clarifies, he proceeds.

The "thunder" mentioned in the second instruction may be regarded as a passage through one of the so-called "points of indifference" (*layabindu,* in a corresponding Sanskrit expression), with an ensuing sudden change of state. In fact, from the second *logos* we learn that the initiate assumes the way of being proper to the very Gods of this order; the cyclical view is revealed to him, in which he creatively perceives the sidereal essences filling the ethereal space. The experience ends with the vision of an immense "wheel" and of closed "fiery doors," which signify universal "Necessity." This vision is too much to bear, due to a sense of loss that the initiate tries to overcome with wonderful élan in the third *logos* of the Ritual. In this *logos,* the state corresponding to the "Lord of Necessity," the "Prince of Fire," or the "Dominator of the Wheel" is invoked, aroused through its

"Names," attracted and fixed. What follows is a further transformation or change of state: "Silence" gives new strength to the soul, and the heavenly world appears liberated, clarified, no longer subject to fate, but rather in the overshadowing of the superior principle, transparent as a world of Gods, producing exaltation and ecstasy. The invocation continues. At first, what is outlined is the experience of a new, "central" way of being, proper to this world. What follows is the apparition or projection of the Solar God. The following ritual puts the initiate in contact with the elementary cosmic power, with the primordial nature of the κόσμος τῶν θεῶν (world of the gods). The Solar God leads to the "Pole," to the "midpoint" or "base point." This point needs to be "fixed," while at the same time, by "bellowing," the primordial Ammonic and taurine strength, or the "Strength of Strengths," is awakened. This brings about a second opening of "doors" and an ensuing emergence from the depths of the septenary hierarchy. This hierarchy is first experienced in its "feminine," manifested, and dynamic aspect, and then in the further masculine, unmanifested, unchanging aspect.

Nor does action of the ritual end here. This very hierarchy is transcended, and through a further deepening and fixation (which may correspond to the passage to the Ogdoad [the highest plane] mentioned by Gnostics), the nature of Mithras himself is actualized. Mithras is he who assumes and dominates the taurine, cosmic force that carries and moves all things. After being experienced in a magical projection or image, this supreme principle, in a second phase, is directly realized. The Mithraic nature, evoked and mastered through a new "bellowing," is "fixed" by the initiate. He *commands* it to remain, for the perfection of the state of him who is free from necessity, birth, and death. In many parts of the text there are sentences that are uncertain or susceptible to different interpretations. While keeping within the limits of philological correctness, we have tried to present a comprehensible and coherent translation, insofar as with this publication we have not endeavored to make a contribution to secular philology, but rather to shed some light on the phenomenology of the mysteriosophic experience.

TEXT

χρὴ οὖν σε, ὦ θύγατερ, λαμβάνειν χυλοὺς
βοτανῶν μ[ε]λόντων σοί ἐν τῷ τέλει τοῦ
ἱεροῦ μου συντάγματος

I

Propitiation Formula

Be favorable to me, O Providence and Fortune, as I write these first mysteries to be transmitted to the only Son, who will be rendered immortal, to the Initiate worthy of this Power of ours. The great Sun God Mithras ordered me to transmit these mysteries through his own Archangel. Be favorable to me, so that I alone, the Eagle, may reach the Heavens and contemplate all things.

II

Invocatory Logos

First origin of my origin, AEÈIOYO; Beginning of my beginning, PPP OOO PHR; Spirit of the spirit, of the first breath in me, M M M; Fire, that God has given in the mixture of the mixtures in me, first fire in the fire of me ÈYÈIAEÈ; Water of the water in me, first Water of the water in me, O O O A A A E E E; first earthly essence of the earthly essence in me, YÈYÒÈ; Perfect Body of me—born of N. (name) of N. (mother)—that the honored Arm and incorruptible Right Hand have formed in the dark and transparent world, inanimate body that was animated, YÈI AYI EYÒIE!

If you deem it right, though I am still held back by my inferior nature, allow me to attain the Immortal Birth, so that, having overcome the incessant need that holds me in its terrible grip, I may contemplate the immortal Principle through the immortal Breath ANCHREPHRENESUPHIRINCH, through immortal Water ERONOYIPARAKOYNETH, through the Earth and the Air EIOAÈPSENABÒTH; so that I may be reborn to the intelligence KRAOCHAXRO; so that I may give to myself a new beginning and breathe in me the Holy Breath, NECHTHEN APO TOY NECHTHINARPIÈTH; so that I may contemplate the abyss of the East, the horrible Water, NYÒ THEGÒ ECHÒ

OYOCHIECHÒA and the vivifying Ether spread all around me may hear me, ARNOMÈTHPH; for I, a mortal man born of a mortal womb, being now made better by the strength of the highest Strength and by the incorruptible Right Hand—today I want to behold with an immortal eye and with imperishable Breath the immortal Aeon, the Lord of the Fiery Crowns.

Having been purified by sacred ceremonies, as the human strength of my soul endured in a pure state for a brief time, I will receive it again beyond the insistent and urgent need that oppresses me, which no lament can ever dispel. This is what I, N. (name), born of N. (mother), want according to the unshakable order of God, EYÈYIAEÈIAÒEIANIYAIIEÒ.

However, since it would not be possible for me, a mere mortal, to rise together with the golden effulgence of immortal splendor, I command to you ÒÈY AEÒ ÈYA EÒÈ YAE ÒIAE. Be still, O mortal nature destined to perish, and allow me to go beyond the inexorable, hard-pressing need. For I am the Son, I breathe MOYOPROCHÒ PRÒA, I am MOY PRÒ—by breathing PRÒE, I am!

III

First Instruction

Breathe from the solar rays, inhaling three times as deeply as you can, and you will see yourself rise up, above every height, and you will feel as though suspended in midair.

You will no longer hear any sound coming from a person or a living being; you will no longer see any mortal thing of the earth; but all the things you see will be immortal.

You will see the divine order of the proper day and of the hour; you will see the Gods who rise toward heaven, others descending from it, and you will see the course of the visible Gods through the Disk of my Father—God.

You will see the so-called Flute, in an analogous way, which is the beginning of the Wind at the service of the Great Work. You will see something like a flute hanging out of the disk, in the direction where the heavenly currents begin, as an infinite wind from the east. But if the other wind, blowing eastward, should appear to you, you will see it as the opposite of what is seen.

And you will also see the Gods staring at you and acting as if they were ready to assail you. At that time, place the right finger over your mouth and say:

IV

First Logos

Silence Silence Silence

Symbol of the incorruptible living God, protect me o Silence NEKTHEIRTHANMELY!

Then hiss for a long time: *S! S!* Then exhale and say:

PROPROFENGÈ MORIOS PROPHYR PROPHENGE NEMETHIRE ARPSENTEN TITETMIMEÒYENARTHPHYRKEKÒPSYRIDARIÒTYRÈPHILBA!

Then you will see the gods looking favorably upon you, no longer acting as if they were ready to attack you, but going about their own business.

V

Second Instruction

When you see the higher cosmos free and all illuminated, and no aggressive behavior on the part of the Gods and Angels, expect to hear a great crash like thunder, such that you will remain stunned. But say again:

VI

Second Logos

Silence! Silence!

I am a star that journeys with you and shines from the abyss

OXYOXERTHUTH!

Immediately after saying this, the solar disk will suddenly begin to expand.

And after you have recited this second logos—namely the word "Silence" twice and everything else—hiss twice and blow twice and straightaway you will see many five-pointed stars coming out of the solar disk, quickly filling the entire space. Then say again:

Silence! Silence!

And when the Disk opens up, you will see an immense wheel and fiery locked doors. Closing your eyes, recite rapidly the following logos:

VII

Third Logos

Listen and hear me—N. (name), son of N. (mother)—O Lord who has closed to the spirit the fiery doors of heaven! You, who have a double body, you who dwell in Fire PENPTERUNI, Creator of Light, keeper of the Keys SEMESILAM, burning breath PSYRINEY, soul of Fire IAÒ, breath of Light AOI, joy of Fire AILURE, beautiful Light AZAIAIÒNNACHBA; you, Lord of Light PEPPERPREPEMPIPI, whose body is Fire PHMUÈNIOK, giver of Light, spreading Fire AREIEICHITA, sparking Fires GALLABALBA; you who in Light have life AIAIÒ and are the power of Fire PYRIKIBOOSÈIA; you who move the Light SANKERÒB and unleash the Thunderbolts ÒÈIÒÈIÒ, glory of Light BAIEGENNÈTE, giver of Light SUSINEPHI, you who preside over the heavenly Light SUSINEPHI ARENBARAZEI MARMARENTEY, leader of the stars!

Open the door to me PROPROPHENGE EMETHEIRE MORIOMOTYREPHILBA! Because of the bitter and urgent need that presses me on, I invoke your venerable immortal living Names, those that never descended into a mortal nature, which were never expressed in any mortal human language or voice!

ÈEÒ OÈEÒ IÒÒ OÈ ÈEÒ ÈEÒ OÈEÒ IÒÒ OÈÈÈ ÒÈE ÒOÈ IÈ ÈÒ OÒ OÈ IEÒ OÈ ÒOÈ IEÒOÈ IEEÒ EÈ IÒ OÈ IOÈ ÒÈÒ EOÈ OEÒ ÒIÈ ÒIÈEÒ OI III ÈOÈ ÒEU ÈÒ OÈE EÒÈIA AÈAEÈA ÈEEÈ EEÈ EEÈ IEÒ ÈEÒ OÈEEOÈ ÈEÒ EYÒ OÈ EIÒ EÒ ÒÈ ÒÈ ÒÈ EE OOOYIOÈ

Say all this with fire and spirit from beginning to end, and then a second time, and so on until you have realized the seven immortal Gods of the cosmos.

Having said all this, you will hear thunder and the upheaval of everything that surrounds you; then you will feel deeply shaken. Once again say "Silence" with the following invocation.

After this, open your eyes and you will see the doors open and the world of the gods that is within them; and for the joy and pleasure of the sight, your spirit leaps and rises up.

Then, staying still, breathe in the divine, staring unflinchingly within your spirit.

When your soul is restored, say:

VIII

Fourth Logos

Come, O Lord

ARKANDARA PHÒTAZA PYRIPHÒTAZA BYTHIX

ETIMENNEROPHORATHÈNERIÈ

PROTHRIPHORATHI

Having said this, the solar rays will converge on you. You will become their center. When this is fulfilled in you, you will see a young handsome God, with fiery hair, wearing a white tunic and a scarlet mantle, with a fiery crown on his head.

Greet him straightaway with the greeting of Fire:

IX

Fifth Logos

Hail, O Lord, strong and powerful, most influential King, highest of all the Gods; Sun, Lord of Heaven and Earth, God of Gods, powerful is your breath, mighty is your strength. Lord, if it so please you, announce me to the highest God who has begotten and produced you, since a man asks to worship you, as far as a human can. I am N. (name), son of N. (mother), born of the mortal womb of N. and of sperm, and I have been regenerated by you. I have been rendered immortal among myriads of beings at this moment, thanks to God's will that transcends all goodness.

As soon as you have said this, He will take you to the Pole and you will see him as if on a road. Then, staring at him intently, emit a prolonged bellowing, sounding like a horn, expel all of your breath, pressing simultaneously on your ribs, kiss the amulets, and say toward your right:

X

Sixth Logos

Protect me, *PROSYMÈRI*

Having said this, you will see the doors open and seven virgins arise from the depths, with serpent faces. These are the dominating Fates, golden arbiters of the Heavens. At this sight, greet them in this fashion:

Greetings, o seven heavenly goddesses of Destiny (οὐρανοῦ Τύχαι), *noble Virgins, kind and holy, whose lives are as MINIMIRROPHOR; you, most sacred guardians of the four columns:*

Hail to you, the first	*KREPSENTHAÈS!*
Hail to you, the second	*MENESKEÈS!*
Hail to you, the third	*MEKRAN!*
Hail to you, the fourth	*ARARMAKÈS!*
Hail to you, the fifth	*EKOMMIE!*
Hail to you, the sixth	*TIKNONDAÈS!*
Hail to you, the seventh	*ERUROMBRIÈS!*

XI

Seventh Logos

Then seven Gods will come forward, with the faces of black bulls, wearing linen around the loins, wearing seven golden crowns. These are the so-called Lords of the heavenly Pole, whom you also must welcome, greeting each one with his proper name:

Hail, Guardians of the Pivot, you sacred and strong youths who at command turn together the Axis of the Heavenly Wheel and hurl thunder and thunderbolts, earthquakes and lightning against the race of the impious. However, grant me, as I love Good and venerate God, bodily health, perfect intellect (lit. "sight" or "vision"), *steady gaze, and calmness during these good hours of this day, O my Lords and great powerful Gods!*

Hail to you, the first	*AIÈRÒNTHI!*
Hail to you, the second	*MERKEIMEROS!*
Hail to you, the third	*AKRIKIUR!*
Hail to you, the fourth	*MESARGILTÒ!*
Hail to you, the fifth	*KIRRÒALITHÒ!*

Hail to you, the sixth *ERMIKTHATHÒPS!*

Hail to you, the seventh *EORASIKÈ!*

When they place themselves here and there according to their order, look intently at the air and you will see lightning and bright lights; the earth will shudder and a God will descend, an immense, radiant presence. He is young, with golden hair, wearing a white tunic, a golden crown, and a long robe (anaxurides), holding in his right hand the golden shoulder of the Calf.

This is the Bear who moves and turns the heavens, high or low, according to the seasons.

Then you will see lightning come forth from his eyes, and stars from his body.

At that precise moment, emit a long bellowing by pressing on your stomach so that all five senses may be stirred; prolong this to the end and, kissing your amulets, again say:

XII

Eighth Logos

You, MOKRIMOPHERIMOPHERERIZÒN of mine—N. (name), born of N. (mother)—stay with me in my soul. Do not depart from me, since I command to you ENTHOPHENENTHROPIÒTH.

Stare intently at the God, bellowing for a long time, and then greet him in this fashion:

XIII

Ninth Logos

Hail, Lord, Master of the Waters; hail, Origin of the Earth; hail Sovereign of the Spirit!

Lord, in palingenesis I die in an integrated state, and in integration I have achieved the fulfillment.

Born of animal birth, having been liberated I am transported beyond mortal generation,

As you have established,

As you have decreed,

As you have done, O Great Mystery!

☿

CORRESPONDENCES[49]:

ω = *ò*	γγ = *ng*
η = *è*	γκ = *nk*
θ = *th*	ου = *u*
υ = *y*	φ = *ph*
χ = *ch*	κ = *k*

Commentary

I

We could associate "Providence" and "Fortune" *(pronoia kai tychè)*, which are invoked in the *propitiation formula,* with the *Hvarenô,* namely the "Glory" or "Heavenly Fire" that according to the ancient Persian tradition is thought to descend from above in order to consecrate kings, priests, and conquerors. Hence, in the same formula, its relation with the power of initiation and consecration that the invocator declares to have already received; thus he can turn to the next achievement and rise from the rank of "Son" to that of "Eagle," according to the ritual given in the text.

In any event, *Pronoia* is one of the epithets of Athena, the goddess of Wisdom, who, as a result of her infinite knowledge, has also the power to *foresee* future events; thus, she can bestow opportune knowledge so that nothing may disturb the outcome of the sacred operation. *Tychè* is the equivalent of the Roman goddess Fortuna, who is usually portrayed with wings, leaning on a sphere or wheel, which are the emblems of her speed. Sometimes *Tychè* is also veiled, to indicate that she goes her way without following any human criterion. The invocation of the two goddesses suggests that the neophyte, in his attempt to achieve immortality, not only invokes Fortune (namely the unpredictable and instantaneous power that

49. The chart of correspondences was provided to assist readers in following how Luce transliterated the invocatory Greek words of the ritual into the Roman alphabet, particularly with regard to the seven Greek vowels. The usage of the vowels is mentioned in section II of the Commentary on the ritual. (Editor's note)

plays such a role in magical operations), but also the wisdom necessary to recognize the "gifts" and to assume them at the proper time. (Another reading gives *psychè* instead of *tychè*. In that case the initiate would invoke not only all of his intellectual faculties, but the soul itself, or *psychè* with all of its infinite capabilities: in other words, the whole life source in him.) More generally, the word *tychè,* understood as "destiny," may suggest the "fatal" aspect of the entire process. "Son" should be understood here as "Son of the Art" and also as "born according to power," due to the double meaning of the word *dynamis,* which in the Gnostic-Christian literature includes the meanings of salvific power, miracle, sacrament (e.g., Romans 1:16; Matthew 7:22; Mark 6:5; II Corinthians 12:12). As such, the term "son" must refer to the subject of the *Mysterion,* in regard to the "Father," the one who in the initiatory act transmits to the neophyte the *principle* or potential of awakening. At the end of the ritual, we shall see that this force reveals the very nature of Mithras: the initiate must get hold of it and fix it in himself, thus becoming in turn, with this act, a center and a "Father," which is the highest rank in the hierarchy of these Mysteries. The "Father" is the fulfillment of the "Eagle," the bird capable not only of taking off from the "earth" and flying in the "air" (according to what is found in the *first instruction*) but also *to stare at the Sun,* according to the law of Mithras, conqueror of the Sun.

In this regard, we agree with Dieterich and Mead that the expression "Sun-Mithras" is a gloss of an ignorant scribe, since in this tradition Mithras is not the Sun God, but one who becomes his ally and ambassador only after defeating him. In the ancient Western tradition the Eagle was the "bird" sacred to Jupiter: it was portrayed with a sheaf of *red* thunderbolts in its claws (the *white* thunderbolts came from Minerva; the *black* ones from Vulcan—and the student of Hermetic sciences might find references to the three main "colors" of the "matter" of the Work). The eagle is the symbol of strength and of the sovereign power. It was the ensign of imperial Rome and of its legions, and also the symbol of cities, especially in Egypt, where its hieroglyph indicated Heliopolis (the "City of the Sun"). As far as Jupiter's iconography is concerned, we may note in passing that the Supreme God is portrayed in a *sitting* position, to suggest that the highest power presiding over the universe is stable and steady and that it never changes (cf. the symbolism of the "Pole," discussed later). The na-

ked torso of the God indicates that he manifests himself to the *divine* intelligences; his *lower* half, being covered, represents what is *unknown* to man. One more reference. In the Hermetic treatise "*The Virgin of the World,*" Isis declares that the sovereignty of Wisdom is in the hands of Harnabeshinis, a name that Prietschmann transcribed as "*Hor neb en Xennu*" (Gold, Lord of Xennu); its hieroglyph is precisely a golden *eagle* that flies close to the Sun, staring at it without blinking.

The expression *paradota mystèria,* in which *mystèrion* has the meaning of initiatory act, leads us from Mithraism to the general doctrine of *traditio* (tradition) and of *tradere* (to hand down) on the basis of a "presence." This presence was known in Kabbalah as the *Shekinah;* in the Arabic traditions as *Baraka,* or blessing; and in this case the same as the *pronoia kai tychè* or *Hvarenô* that is first invoked by the theurgist. We have mentioned this doctrine, common to all the Mysteries of antiquity, in chapter III, in relation to the Tantric text published there. (Cf. Lobeck, *Aglaophamus,* no. 39 in the bibliography; and for the meaning, A. Reghini, *E. C. Agrippa e la sua Magia,* Milan, 1926.) Compare the propitiatory formula found in the text with that given in the magical ritual of Peter of Abano (*Heptameron,* XI): "My heavenly Father, let me know today if I, a sinner, am allowed as your unworthy son, to display the *arm* of your power against these very obstinate spirits, so that if you will, I may be enlightened with every wisdom, and ever glorify and adore your Name."

II

In the *first logos* the theurgist evokes from the depths of his being the sensation of the "perfect body," or "complete body" *(soma teleion),* which is like the "act" of the various "elements" that in their dark and corruptible form constitute his animal body. This "body" is formed by the "world of Light and Darkness, of Life and Death"; in other words, it is drawn from things that, being subject to becoming, "are and are not," and this occurs through the "power of the Right Hand." This name of initiatic power, which we have already mentioned, effects the "change according to substance" that is conceived, also in Gnosticism, Hermetism, and neo-Platonism, as an integration, a rectification, a fixing, and a straightening. The manner of the "elements," as they are found in man's physical body, is *oblique,* curved,

weak, dark, evanescent: it is the *world of shadows and corpses.* The essential virile virtue of the "Right Hand" (the "Hand of Power," since in Hebrew and in Arabic *jod,* or "hand," also means *power*) and of "Justice," fixes these elements; it activates them, arouses them, makes them *alive.*

At that moment, the *law of homeopathy* sets in. According to an initiatic teaching, in every organ of a complete human body, there lies as though chained a form of *cosmic sensibility;* this constitutes a way to communicate "according to substance" with the corresponding elements of the superior and interior world. In the *invocatory logos,* the theurgist tries to stir his consciousness in this "direction" and toward this cosmic relationship, for it is only on its basis that the ritual or magical act can produce an effect (see the essay by Leo in chapter I). The doctrine of the "Perfect Body" has correspondences in many other traditions: we may recall here St. Paul's "spiritual body"; the *augoeides,* or "radiant body" mentioned by Plotinus and Olympiodorus; the *vajra-kâya,* or "body of the diamond-thunderbolt," of Tibetan Tantricism *(Vajra-yâna).* This "body" is a "resurrection body" and a "magical body." In Agrippa (*De Occulta Philosophia,* III, 44) it is written: "In the whole world there is nothing so admirable, so excellent, so miraculous, that the human soul carrying in its constitution the image of the divinity, *which the magicians call a soul that stands without falling,* cannot do by its own virtue and without any external help." The technical expression "standing, not falling," which is traditional and was used in the earliest times, refers to the above-mentioned "strengthening" through the "power of the right hand." In the *Corpus Hermeticum,* Tat, the "Son of the Art," tells his Master, Hermes-Thoth: "O Father, having been strengthened by God, I do not contemplate with the eyes, but with the intellectual energy of the powers." The term used is *a-klinès, "made stable,* unyielding." From here we can refer to the term *sahu* that was the ancient designation for the body through which the deceased was confirmed in immortality. In Egyptian, *aha* means "to stand up, to face something"; when we add the prefix *s-*, which in that language forms causative verbs, we have *saha* (to cause something to stand up, to carry upward, to straighten). In the ancient Egyptian language the deceased was also called *kherit,* namely he who has fallen. It was only in virtue of the *sahu* formed by the ritual that immortality was granted to him. Moreover, the name itself of the Hermetic interlocutor Tat, means "stability" in Egyptian; the hieroglyph that corre-

sponds to its pronunciation is the nilometer, namely the trunk of the tamarisk on which, according to tradition, the body of the slain Osiris came to rest before his resurrection. In Greek *an-istèmi* and *ana-stasis* have the same meaning as the Egyptian *sahu;* these terms are employed by Herodotus and even by Homer in the sense of rising from death. The initiatic power causes the fallen one to rise up again, turning him (through the "perfect" or "rectified" body) from a "shadow" and a "corpse" into a *Living Being.* In the name of the transcendent reality evoked in one's body, the theurgist seeks extinction of cravings through a "birth that is free from death," the extinction of "necessity." The idea of *anankè* is found in the most ancient Hellenic mysteriosophy, and it corresponds to the Hindu *karma* and to the Buddhist *tanha.* Anankè refers to the deep irrational yearning by which a being is precipitated into a physical life, and to that yearning which, from a state of "being-in-oneself," leads to the state of "ex-istence," namely of "being outside."

According to a special and more technical aspect, "necessity" and the "burning, ceaseless yearning" mentioned several times in the text may refer to a characteristic experience that occurs in many people, as soon as with the first disciplines they succeed (whether they know it or not) in touching and setting in motion something in the subterranean zone of their being. This experience is like an organic, absolute, and unending *hunger,* generating an incomparable anguish and dissatisfaction. It searches around, seeking satisfaction by turning to this or that object, becoming identified with this or that human tendency or desire, starting with physical hunger, all the way to the spasms of a passion such as that described in *Tristan and Isolde.* This is a vain attempt, because it is a hunger that cannot be satisfied by anything earthly or human. It desperately enhances every type of sensation, while nevertheless remaining insufficient; thus, what remains is a sort of consuming yearning for the void. Then, *to die* may appear as a supreme joy and the only object adequate for the desire (e.g., *muero porque non muero* [I die because I do not die], uttered by St. Theresa of Avila; we find the same situation in the hymn to darkness and death as the supreme fulfillment of love in *Tristan*). There is almost an obscure intuition that death and night hide something that can extinguish this nameless thirst, as which also comes into question in Orphism (cf. the *Hymns to the Night* of Novalis, and A. Onofri, *Guido al Tristano e Isotta,*

Milan, 1924). We could mention more than one person for whom *suicide* became the epilogue of such an awakening, provoked without adequate control and enlightened consciousness. This particular interpretation of the "need" and "necessity" mentioned by the theurgist is supported by the fact that we are dealing here with a ritual of the Greater Mysteries. This ritual presupposes preliminary practices that might have induced the exact experience in question—that which can be fulfilled only in *death*: either in *teleisthai,* that death which is life or initiatic resurrection; or else in *teleutan,* real death, in which case *telos* does not mean the fulfillment but the end, the extinction of the brief light of individual consciousness.

Being a slave of "necessity" *(ananke),* man is passively led by the "current," according to a law that the initiate attempts to break. Therefore, he needs to *fix* the power of his human soul, to suspend it and to keep it firmly under control, through the higher power he has received—only then the bond will be removed. Through the change of state, his "anguish" will dissolve. The Self will *breathe* the "cosmic air" that is the ether of liberty and liberation, a being-in-no-place, and a freshness made of immaterial activity. This "cosmic air" is the "ether of life" or "ether of the Living," echoing in a spiritual form of sound, in syllables of clarity and enlightenment. These syllables in the ancient Egyptian tradition are the so-called "names of power"; they are also the *mantras* of Hinduism and the "letters of light" of the Kabbalah. Aristides, in regard to the Eleusinian Mysteries, said that one would experience there the most horrible and the most wonderful things; the scariest *(phrikòdestaton)* and the most serene *(phaidrotaton)* feelings that divine things have to offer to men (*Eus.,* 256). Likewise, in this Mithraic ritual, mention is made of the "Wonder of Fire," the "Horror of the Waters" (the "Waters that make one shudder"), and the "Abysses of the Source." We may recall that these experiences refer to the Greater Mysteries, reserved for those who have been strengthened through previous trials, thus being able to overcome the terror, confusion, and rapture that they would cause in most people. The text mentions a protective measure: the immediate invocation or evocation of "Silence"—the state of silence that was spoken of before. The "immortal eye" is the "third eye," the "frontal eye," the "cyclopean" or "solar" eye; it is the eye of *spiritual vision.* The initiatic literature abounds with references to it. Not only can

this eye stare at the Aion, but also things are revealed to it that the "purifying fire" strips of their particular and sensible character. We have mentioned its correspondence with the "eye of Shiva," which in turn alludes to the frontal pearl found in images of the Buddha.

The statement made in this *logos*, that the power of the human soul must be *restored* beyond the state of "necessity," confirms the view that initiation is not a mystical shipwreck, but rather an integration: an integration into a state that is superior to, and which preceded, the conditions of inferior form and existence.

The invocation of the first *logos* is filled with *voces mysticae* (mystical words). We have already spoken of them; they are words that, employed in a special state of fluidic exaltation, have the power to arouse and to evoke—they are almost "absolute expressions," or gestures of power that project the meanings with which the remaining words are charged. In order to be efficacious, these words need to be "awakened." The theurgic "enthusiasm" must "set them alight" and "unlock" them until they erupt almost spontaneously in the evocations. In these "words" we should notice the presence of the seven Greek vowels, which probably correspond in their order to the seven planets and the seven degrees of the magical hierarchy (more on which later) echoing a very widespread symbolism.

III

We have said that the *first instruction* concerns a realization of the "air" element, obtained through breath. This presupposes a knowledge of the Science of Breathing in the sense of the Hindu *prana*, a magical life-energy enclosed within material breathing. The three inspirations probably refer to three depths of breath, inwardly pervaded by an élan that eventually transforms consciousness into the "airy state." The first vision of the Gods that ensues is a supersensible projection, made possible by such a state. In this state, once one has become free of the yoke of physical sensation, in the transparency of the solar Eye or Disk, what sleeps in the buried interiority of man can be known in the guise of images.

In regard to the Gods who travel up and down, we are immediately reminded of Jacob's ladder and of the Telesma, which, according to the "Emerald Tablet," rises from the earth toward heaven and then descends

back to earth, carrying with itself the power of the higher and lower things. These two streams of energy move the cosmic air in conformity to the modulation that the "flute" bestows on the "wind"; they manifest the One Force, to a different and antagonistic degree, according to whether one takes as a reference the East (the symbol of rising, growth, and generation) or the West (the symbol of decay and passing away). If this leads us back to the opposition found in the so-called "Great Magical Agent," we are also inclined to connect to it the meaning of the two mysterious "Dadophoroi" (torch bearers), often found on Mithraic monuments, one carrying his torch upright, and the other holding it toward the ground. Moreover, this is not the first time that we encounter the "Wind" in Mithraism. While Hermetism believes that the wind carries in its womb the Telesma, or the "father of all things," in other Mithraic monuments (e.g., in the bas-relief of Modena—see F. Cumont, *Les Mystères de Mithra,* Brussels, 1913, p. 109) the wind blows over the Aion from four sides; here the Aion finds itself between two halves of an "egg" (a symbol closely related to that of the alchemical athanor).

In the reconstruction of the myth by F. Cumont (ibid., p. 133) we find again the "Wind" scourging Mithras's "nakedness," after he emerges from the "stone," on the edge of the "waters." Mithras belongs to the type of those who do violence to the "tree." Having ripped leaves from it to create a protective "garment," and having eaten its fruits, he turns to measure himself against the lords of the wonderful world in which he has entered and who had witnessed "from the mountaintops" his miraculous birth from the "stone." All these symbols are clear enough for the student of esoteric symbols. According to J. Evola's interpretation[50] the "wind" is related to the initial experience of the cosmic power that invests the initiate at the precise moment he becomes free of the physical bonds. The initiate needs to reaffirm himself over this force with a projection of the positive fire that attracts a descent of the feminine cosmic power. This force will cover the nucleus of the initiate with a "garment of power" or of "flame," which will then become his supersensible body. In this ritual we find almost the same thing, since the initiate to the *Mysterion* lives as his own realization the

50. J. Evola, *The Path of Enlightenment in the Mithraic Mysteries,* trans. G. Stucco (Edmonds, Wash.: Alexandrian Press, 1994).

meanings enclosed in the myth. However, the experience of the "wind" is followed by that of the Gods in the act of falling upon the newcomer, as they are the enemies of those who try to release themselves from their control and to identify themselves with the supreme principle.

IV

The invocation of this principle, together with "Silence," allows the theurgist to pass the test and to transform the influences of the Gods into something good; they are now left behind, "going about their own affairs," left behind in their own laws. This "silence" that resolves the tension recalls the *paue, paue* (be still, be still) of a Naasene Gnostic fragment: "The same Man, the Phrygians call also *Papas*, because he set at rest all things which had been moved irregularly and discordantly before his coming. For the name Papas is the synthetic sound of all things in heaven, on earth and below the earth, saying 'Be still, be still' *(paue paue)* to the discord of the cosmos. The Phrygians also call him the 'corpse' when he is buried in the (material) body as in a tomb; and after the transformation, God." (Hippolytus V, I, 21–22)

The gesture of putting a finger on the lips recalls the famous figure of the god Harpocrates (see Apuleius, *Metamorphoses,* I), who in the Egyptian tradition expresses a form of the rising Sun, a personification of Horus the Young, namely of the original force that rises again and reasserts itself after Osiris has been cut to pieces (the symbol of the process of individuation). Once this force awakens and leaves the "sepulcher," it imposes silence on chaos and on the turmoil of the elementary nature that is still untamed. Philalethes (*Introitus ad occlusum regis palatium,* VI, XI) talks about certain impurities of the "air"; the formation of "clouds" that darken the sky and need to be dispelled until the whiteness of the Moon is discernible; and of abundant rains that need to be produced to restore to the Air its serenity. Most likely this alludes to the same experience. The encounter with the guardians of heavenly doors and their overcoming through magical formulas is also found in Gnostic texts, e.g., in the one given by Dieterich (p. 35 n.) "Go back Ialdabaoth and Kuro, archons of the third aeon, since I invoke ZUZÊZÂZ ZAÔZUZ KÔZÔZ. Then the archons of the third aeon will leave and flee, to the West, to the left, and you will ascend."

The *hissing* is found in Peter of Abano's *Heptameron:* it is followed by "great upheavals" and the apparition of entities that at first seem to assail the operator who stands within the magical circle and who, after he displays to them "Solomon's Seal," assume a peaceful posture and obey him.

VI

The initiate's declaration of his own sidereal dignity is often found in the mysteriosophic literature. It is also reaffirmed in the Orphic laminae, before the guardians of Mnemosine's spring: "My lineage is heavenly (ἔμοι γένος οὐράνιον), as you well know. I am burning and consumed with thirst." "I am the son of Earth and starry Heaven. My lineage is heavenly." *(Lam. Petelia)* "I belong to your blessed stock. But Moira and the thunder struck me down, drying me up." (*Lam. Thurii,* II)

In our ritual the declaration seems to have a determinative sense, establishing commonality with the heavenly natures into whose circles one has ventured. What ensues is the solar vision, represented by the "Disk." The "hissing" and "blowing" are most likely related to the practice of breath. We may even compare this with the so-called "purification of the nadis" *(nadishudda),* consisting of an expiration (hissing), broken down in small segments, and acted upon mentally so as to expel the turbid and impure elements of the fluidic body and to actualize all of its "currents." This action, in the text, comes after the "thunder" (I have already mentioned the thunder that causes Dante, in his otherworldly journey, to "pass out"—*Inferno,* III, 130ff.), and it seems to confirm a certain steadiness among the turmoil of the inner elements produced by the thunder itself. The solar vision has an identifying character: it takes place in a space that is consciousness itself, in its immaterial simplicity. As far as the five-pointed star is concerned, we could interpret it as a vision of human beings, whose "Number" is five. In that case, the immense wheel is the Wheel of Generation, the Wheel of Destiny and of Necessity, corresponding to the Hindu *samsâra.* Compare this with one of the recurrent sayings of the Buddhist *Majjhima-nikâjo:* "With a heavenly, clear, and otherworldly eye he sees beings appear and disappear, vulgar and noble, beautiful and ugly, happy and unhappy—he clearly sees how beings continuously reappear according to their actions." The counterpart of the necessity that rules over earthly

affairs is the barring of the heavenly doors; it is not possible to go beyond, unless this horrible vision, which permeated the most ancient Hellas, is overcome. This can be done by neutralizing the confusion of the human nature by invoking the Lord of Fire.

VII

This invocation is one of the most beautiful and powerful to be found in this type of literature. There is indeed an occult rhythm that connects the various attributes with the *nomina arcana* (hidden names) and drives them forward with increasing exaltation, culminating in the series of divine names. Here the expression seems released from articulation, vibrating in the form of pure acts. The text says that the *logos* must be repeated until the seven gods are *fulfilled,* namely *realized,* sculptured in the inner light. Finally, after a new "Silence" in which one becomes free and "fixes" the impetus of the evocation, the "doors" open up (the "thunder" and "precipitation" mark the new change of state, or the new "fall of potential," to use a physical image), the Gods appear, and consciousness is transported above, among them. The "Names," says the text, must be pronounced "in Fire and Spirit"—in the Hermetic conjunction of Solar and Lunar; Mercury and Sulfur; dry, golden masculine strength and fluidic, humid feminine breath; and with sufficient "direction of efficacy." The various attributes must act upon the evocator's spirit like pieces of kindling, which are thrown into the fire to produce an ever stronger flame.

VIII

I have mentioned already that the invocation is both one and sevenfold. It is addressed to the seven planetary Gods and to the One, to the solar Aion who is their root, comprehending and transcending them. In fact, it is this Aion who is invoked by the new *logos* and who appears after the septenary hierarchy of Gods and Goddesses.

The Aion holding the heavenly keys is without a doubt the Mithraic Chronos. The epithet "Thou double-bodied" is also found in the Mithraic monuments, in which this being is portrayed with the head of a lion with open jaws (symbol of devouring Fire), and a human body. It also has wings, and a snake is wound around its body (cf. the "Serpent *kundalini*" in Tantric

symbolism, wrapped around the *Svayamku-linga* [phallus] of Shiva, the principle of transcendent virility) and holds its head on the middle of Aion's brow (another reference to the "place" of the cyclopean eye). Aion holds in one hand the thunderbolt and in the other a key (or, in some images, a scepter). Its feet tread upon the lunar symbol, just as in the alchemists' symbol of "Rebis" (also a "double symbol," and hermaphroditic) and in that of the "Virgin," the esoteric meaning of which has been totally lost among Christians. Like the Phoenix, this Aion grows out of fire.

IX

In the space of the *fourth logos,* while the mode of centrality is being formed (the rays take the initiate as the center of convergence), Mithras's messenger appears. In the following *logos,* the fifth, there are various noteworthy points. It is confirmed, first of all, that the "Sun" here is not the highest deity. I have already said that Mithras, instead of being subjected to the divine strength (as happened in the Hebrew myth to Adam, who likewise took from the "tree," and to other brave men mentioned in the same Orphic laminae, who were struck down and incinerated by lightning), overcomes it and makes this victory his warrant for an alliance with the Sun.

We next notice the expression concerning the Juice of Life, of the sperm that, having created the animal body of the initiate, undergoes a *transformation* in the ritual. It seems that what is hinted at here is the doctrine of the occult regeneration of sexual power, or of the "conversion of the Waters flowing below, into Waters flowing above." Not only is this highly secret operation alluded to in the evocation, but it also seems that the ritual mentions its practical execution in the course of the theurgic action. We refer here to the part after the fifth *logos,* where mention is made of the solar God who goes to the "Pole," to the "Support," and then *proceeds:* where mention is made of a "bellowing" and a complete expiration. We may recall that in Kundalini Yoga, the "place" of kundalini (which in its dormant form is said to be none other than man's generative power)—of that kundalini which is the cosmic Fire, the serpentine Power encircling the body of the Mithraic Aion, and also effigies of *masculine* deities in the Syrian cults of Isis—is called *muladhara,* meaning "radical support," an idea that corresponds to that of a "pole" or "pivot." The theurgist is led to

the root of his being, to the *muladhara,* and thus to the awakening of the "fire" of kundalini by the solar principle actualized in himself. *Bellowing* (Mô) may be a mantra of awakening; thus the comparison with the mantra OM (made by Mead) and with the HUM in Tantric texts employed for these practices seems well founded when we consider the "reversal" undergone by verbal expressions in their "subtle" usage. To exhale one's entire breath, articulating the act by bellowing, reminds us of one of the main teachings of Kundalini Yoga, in which the *kumbhaka* (the suspension of breath that has completely been exhaled or completely retained) is said to create a propitious state for the awakening of kundalini. In any event, there is no doubt that bellowing is connected to the "taurine power," the creative, masculine, and Ammonic force. Outside of Mithraism, bellowing is also found in the Thracian rites of Dionysus. Dieterich, following the studies of Andrew Lang (*Custom and Myth,* 43), relates it to the so-called "bull-roarer." This is an instrument found in the ceremonies of various primitive peoples in New Mexico, Australia, Africa, and New Zealand; it produces a sort of rumbling or bellowing that evokes the God or announces his arrival. No woman can see this instrument without dying. Thus the esoteric interpretation may be this: the taurine power burns and destroys the "woman in the Self," such that he who awakes it without first establishing himself in the hard and dry nature of the "Iron of the Wise" ends in catastrophe.

Concerning bellowing, we may note these interesting verses of an ecstatic shaman hymn: "The mighty bull has bellowed! The horse of the steppe has shuddered! I am above all of you, I am a man! I am endowed with all things! I am the man created by the Lord of the Infinite!" (M. Eliade, *Le chamanisme et les techniques archaïques de l'extase,* Paris, 1951, p. 210) A special technical meaning is found in the injunction to *stare at* the solar God, once he, after reaching the "Pole," proceeds along the "path." This path, if the parallel we are drawing is correct, could be the path followed by the fire of kundalini and the place from which—shifting to Far Eastern symbolism—the "Dragon" will take off. The act of "staring" would then express an absolute and yet immaterial endurance while being carried off in such a "flight." Without this capacity of endurance, the operation may have the lethal result we have mentioned. In Agrippa we read: "There is in man's body a certain little bone, which the Hebrews call *luz,* which is incorruptible, *neither it is overcome by fire,* but is always preserved

unhurt, out of which (they say) as a plant out of a seed, our human body will regrow at the resurrection of the dead. And these virtues are not declared by reasoning, but by experience." (*De Occulta Philosophia,* I, 20) In Aramaic, *luz* is the name of the bone attached to the lower extremity of the *sacral* bone, at the base of the spinal cord. This is precisely the location of *muladhara,* according to Hindu teachings, and the seat of kundalini. Kundalini is said to *regenerate* the body since it draws out of the "sepulcher" in which the mystical "Papas" lies—the Dead One mentioned in the Naasene fragment—the "perfect body" of our ritual.

In the previous chapter it was said that *Luz,* in the Pentateuch (Genesis 28), was the ancient name of the city of *Bethel* ("House of God"). It was near this city that Jacob had his famous dream. As he woke up he exclaimed: "Surely the Lord is in this place and I knew it not," then, seized by *fear,* he added: "How *dreadful* is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the *gate* of heaven." Now the *muladhara,* in the Hindu tradition, is called none other than "Brahman's threshold." There are also numerous references from Hermetic alchemy. We again cite Philalethes (Ibid., IV): "This center (of the "magnet") naturally turns toward the *Pole,* in which the virtue of our Steel is fortified by degrees. And in this Pole is found the heart of our Mercury, which is a true fire in which rests its Lord—and sailing across this great Sea, he will go even to the two Indies." Moreover, it is said that at the entrance of a "cave" near Luz (which can be related to the Hermetic symbols of the "mine," "Mercury's cave," and the cave of Trophonius, and well as reflected in a materialized form in the various prehistoric "cave-cults") there was an almond tree with a hole in the trunk, through which one could find the path to a "city," so thoroughly hidden that the "angel of Death" could not enter in or have any power over it (*Jewish Encyclopedia,* vol. 8, p. 219). If anyone should take the trouble to look through a Tantric text (*Shiva-Candra,* in the *Tantravatta,* III, 2nd ed.), he might be surprised to find an almost identical allegory in regard to the secret ritual of Yoga. The "Pole," which supports the solar principle, "our Gold," could be the subject of important symbolic considerations. In the Far Eastern tradition it corresponds to the "invariable pivot" from which Heaven's activity is manifested. In many other traditions we find the "Polar Mountain," where the entrance to the *Land of the Living* is to be found. At this point, we touch on a new order of ideas; from the

doctrine of the secret art we are led again to that of the invisible kingdom and of the "King of the World," concerning which we refer the reader to the book of the same name by René Guénon.

X–XI

In regard to all this, and to the following phases of the ritual where one encounters the seven gods and seven goddesses, we now turn to a characteristic Hellenic myth. Already, thanks to what has been said so far, one can begin to appreciate the degree to which traditional myths and legends are not the product of sheer fantasy, but rather contain initiatic teachings in coded language. This is the myth that portrays Hermes and Apollo in the act of exchanging the Caduceus and the seven-stringed lyre. Apollo is the solar god, and also the very apparition following the fourth *logos*. He is the god who first goes to the "Pole" and then proceeds along the path, to the point of which he is "fixed" and the bellowing occurs, announcing the awakening of the primordial force. In regard to the technique of this "awakening," I have mentioned the suspension of breath, which would be one of the methods of combining two currents of subtle energy (solar and lunar). In ordinary people these currents are distinct and wind in a serpentine fashion along the two sides of an ideal line running through the body. This line begins at the top of the head and goes all the way down to the sacral bone, roughly following the spinal cord—just like the two snakes of the Hermetic Caduceus, wound around the central staff (see A. Avalon, *The Serpent Power,* Madras, 1924). The caduceus of the myth expresses this arrangement, which brings forth a third, central axis (the staff of the caduceus), to be traveled by kundalini. On this inner axis, the so-called chakras or energy centers are awakened and illuminated. They correspond both in number and meaning to the sevenfold hierarchy: to the seven planets, the seven gods, the seven strings of the lyre, the seven spheres, the seven spirals of the snake carried by the Phrygian deity and by the Mithraic Aion, etc. Thus with the Hermetic composition of the Caduceus, the initiate obtains from the solar principle (Apollo) the access to that "Royal Path" on which, being carried by the taurine power that "opens" the doors to him, he realizes the experience of transcendent states that constitute the immaterial hierarchy of the Hebdomad and the symbolical "Land of the Living."

This realization has two phases: first seven virgins appear, and then seven gods. Referring again to Hindu teaching, in each of the seven chakras there is a sleeping god *(deva)* and a goddess *(devi),* which must be understood as the masculine and the feminine aspects of corresponding metaphysical powers. I have already mentioned that "feminine" aspect is the manifested one, dynamic, active, immanent, and demiurgic; it is the aspect of *shakti,* or of *power,* the substrate of existing things insofar as they exist. The "virginity" of the goddesses expresses being, or such power, at a pure state (not yet subject to the law of duality, of Self and non-Self proper to the physical world). However, their purely demiurgic character is confirmed by their epithets of "guardians of the *four* Foundations" and "Goddesses of Destiny." Conversely, the masculine aspect represents what is transcendent, detached, immutable. This aspect, according to a symbolism found in many traditions, is aptly represented by the color *black,* in contradistinction to the "light" that begins where the manifestation, the expression, the πρόοδος begins, incapable of assuming the primordial creative power, whose nature is shared by the black bull-faced gods. Thus, these are the "supports," or the centers of the seven centers; as the text says, the spinning of the heavenly wheels proceeds from them, referring to the "tertiary" rather than the "quaternary" order. Thus the ritual alludes to visions in which the cosmic septenary is first experienced in its immanent aspect, then in its transcendent aspect; first, in its aspect of "passive perfection" (the *yin* of Chinese tradition), and then in its aspect of "active perfection" (the *yang*) and of "foundation."

We may recall here a celebrated passage from Apuleius: "I came to the boundary of death, and having trodden the threshold of Proserpina, I traveled through all the elements and returned to earth. In the middle of the night I saw the sun flashing with bright light. I came face to face with the *gods below* and the *gods above* and paid reverence to them face to face" (*Metamorphoses,* XI, 23). The correspondence of these phases with the itinerary already described in the Mithraic ritual is quite evident. But the true fulfillment is beyond these experiences. The initiate gradually wrests himself free from the orbits of the gods and of the planets, moving beyond them. It is an ascent corresponding to a *simplification,* to an ἁπλῶσις, to use Plotinus's expression. In each of the spheres, the soul becomes free from those various "passional" elements in virtue of which it was sub-

jected, in its mortal life, to the Lords of these spheres, until it remains totally naked, "clothed only in its own power," as it is said in the *Corpus Hermeticum*. In the Mithraic text, the various overcomings appear to have been given in function of a greeting to each of the gods, mixed together with voices that may have the character of both chrism and spell. The text does not directly reveal the dramatic character that these experiences must have when the initiate attempts to transcend the various cosmic hierarchies by identifying himself with them, unfaltering, enduring, and preserving himself, and when he awakens in their own "ascendant" direction a strength *stronger* than their own, using which he passes to the immediately higher levels of the hierarchy. The ritual leads to the "state beyond the seven," where, with a rumbling of the earth that resembles "thunder" (we may recall the thunder sound of the "Gigantic Man" seen from a "high mountain" mentioned in *The Gospel of Eve* (in Epiphanius, *Haereses,* XXVI, 3), there takes place the encounter of the initiate with Mithras.

The taurine energy (as calf) is again indicated through the symbol of the "Bear" as the central cosmic power, around which the motion of all things gravitates. Mithras is its ruler. He is portrayed in various monuments in the act of carrying a calf's shoulder, thus suggesting his quality of "bull-slayer." And the taurobolium, in this tradition, has the value of a rebirth into eternity (cf. N. Turchi, *Le relig. misteriosofiche del mondo antico,* Rome, 1923, p. 192). The Mithraic doctrine considers the passage of the spirit beyond the seven spheres as what we might call a transcendent taurobolium. Nor should we omit the observation that the *Bear* constellation, referred in the text to Mithras, gives an overall impression of a cart with yoked oxen; and the "North" (Latin *septentrio*) that it points to may be rendered as *septem-triones*—i.e., according to Virgil's use of the term, as "seven oxen." This would lead us right back to what rules the seven gods portrayed with *"black"* bull-faces. In regard to the instruction at the end of the *seventh logos,* we have said that it refers to the glorification of the initiate in Mithras's own nature; to the realization of Mithras's quality, to be actualized in a supreme assumption of the taurine power that has already opened to him the heavenly gates. It is now necessary to operate the same transformation on this power, portrayed in the symbol or ritual of the taurobolium.

XII

In the penultimate *logos,* the theurgist *fixes* this realization in his own soul. This is the "digestion" of Mithras's nature, by *command.* We find here a new witness to the eagle's nature of the initiate, who stares intently at the magical image of the Great God, while in the "bellowing" resounds the threat of that strength that has already been assumed.

An analogous invocation, of Egyptian origin, is found in another Greek magical papyrus (A. Dieterich, *Abraxas,* Leipzig, 1891, 195, 4ff.): "May you dwell in my mind and in my heart all the days of my life, and fulfill everything my soul desires! For you are me and I am you. Whatever I say shall be so for ever, for I have your Name (in a magical sense, that is, your 'presence') as guardian in my 'heart.'"

XIII

The fulfillment of the work is crowned by the final formula of "Hail" to the god of the Ritual, who has performed the Mystery of Transformation. The epithet "Lord of the Waters" reveals a significance that should already be familiar to the reader. That of "Lord of the spirit," which finds an exact counterpart in the *Corpus Hermeticum,* is proper of the "magical" assumptions of the initiatic tradition. Here the higher value is not *to be* spirit, but *Lord* of the spirit. The "regeneration" of the initiate is his integration, his fulfillment, his awakening to that life, next to which the dark, craving-filled life of mortals is nothing but *death.* This is an awakening to a life that is "life in itself" and "of itself" (αὐτοζῷον), an incorruptible life. Liberated in this Life, the initiate proceeds along the "way" (the unnamable *Tao* of Far Eastern tradition); rather he *is* this very Life, since, according to a Sufi saying, "On God's Road, the traveler, the journey, and the path on which he walks are *one* and the same." From "sacred consecrations," from the "Strong strength of all strengths," and from the "incorruptible Right Hand," picked out of the mass of the "dead" and made worthy of initiation, the initiate, the "Son" of Tradition and of Art, rises in the ritual of the Greater Mysteries to the power of the "Eagle," surpassing every height up to the peak at which echoes the formula of the Egyptian *Book of the Dead:*

"I AM YESTERDAY, TODAY AND TOMORROW AND THE POWER OF REBIRTH. I KNOW THE ABYSSES: THAT IS MY NAME."

Magical Appendix to the Ritual[51]

(I)

"I am PHEROYRA MIURI."

After you have said these things, you will immediately be able to prophesy. You will be free in spirit and outside yourself, when he (the God) answers you. He will speak the oracle to you as maxims, and while he speaks he will be visible. But you remain silent.

You will be able to comprehend all these matters by yourself, then you will remember indelibly the things spoken by the great God, even if the oracle contained thousands of maxims.

(II)

If you wish the teaching to be given to a fellow-initiate, you may do this, providing that he alone may hear with you the things spoken; let him remain chaste together with you for seven days in isolation, also breathing the fluid.

(III)

And even if you were alone in this operation, and undertook the things spoken by the God, you would speak as though prophesying in ecstasy.

(IV)

And if you should wish to teach someone, first judge whether he is completely worthy as a man; then if the God has prophesied in favor of him, that he might make himself immortal, confide the first invocation to him, but not the essential part: "First origin of my origin, etc."

Right after this, as you are already an initiate, say the rest of the invocation over his head, in a low voice, so that he may not hear it, and consecrate his vision that he may achieve the mystery.

This consecration to immorality takes place three times a year.

But if anyone, O son, wishes to hear the God through instruction gives to another, he will not be granted it.

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51. This appendix follows immediately after the ritual in the papyrus, but is very likely attributable to a different editor than that of the text itself. We quote here the most important part of it, translated for the first time from the Greek.

(V)

If you want to teach someone else, take the juice of the herb called "kentritis," and smear it with rose petals on his eyes; and he will see so clearly that he will amaze you.

(VI)

I have not found a greater ritual act than this in all the world.

Ask the God for what you want, and he will give to you.

This is the nature of the Great God.

(VII)

Many times I have used the ritual, and have wondered greatly. But the God said to me: "I do not need the consecration, but can prophesy as through a raging river that carries the great mystery of purification, which can be restored just as through the ritual by means of twenty-five living birds; you may also prophesy once a month, at the full moon, instead of three times a year.

V

Summary

Before further developing the material that we intend to discuss in the following essays, it will be helpful to take a look at what we have covered so far.

The first step in initiatic practice is to *know* that *silence* and that *concentration* treated by Luce in chapter I. There, after explaining the symbols of the "waters," those "Saved from the waters," and the "Lords of the waters," the broader meaning of the *Opus Magicum* was given, which the commentary to the *Mithraic Ritual* (chapter IV) has in many respects completed.

The second phase consists in moving the sense of self from the head to the heart, or from a reflected to an organic and central consciousness (see chapter II). Then the possibility opens of establishing contact with the *subtle body,* for which we have begun to give instructions in chapter III.

Just as the material body is the seat of experiences concerning material reality, likewise the subtle body is the seat of experiences concerning subtle reality, or better, the subtle aspect of reality. The experience of this aspect is related to that of the so-called signs, sounds, names of things and of beings. We have already mentioned this in Luce's *Opus Magicum* essay in chapter III, and in the commentary to the *Mithraic Ritual.* In this chapter we will proceed by explaining a general view of the world as Word and Symbol.

These experiences no longer take place through the physical senses, and transcend even the discursive and rational faculties that are essentially connected to the brain and that draw their matter from the physical senses themselves. Having transferred the Self into the heart, the possibility is established, in principle, of a knowledge that is no longer indirect, reflected, perceptive-discursive, but rather direct or *symbolic:* the presence of things and their influences are perceived *in midair,* so to speak, before they generate reactions, only in function of which they appear as "physical things." We have already talked about *symbols* (see Pietro Negri's essay in chapter III) as instruments or supports of a form of knowledge that is no longer sensible-discursive, and which is free from the organ of the brain

and is actuated through the subtle senses. Later on, we will discuss the various traditions of symbols, such as the alchemical-hermetic one.

There are various ways to activate the sense of the "subtle body" and to facilitate the operations that take it as their basis. In this regard we will discuss the use of magical perfumes. In the meantime we wish to integrate in this direction the instruction already given in chapter II, namely the contemplation of a sun that rises in the night and sets during the day, together with the sense that we ourselves ascend and descend a "mountain."

During the night, something occurs that, if expressed materialistically, could be compared to a "freeing" or "detachment" of the subtle body from the physical body. However, the Self, used as it is to lean on the physical body, does not know how to accompany this detachment; thus, the result is not the *awakening,* but the sinking of consciousness into torpor. The above-mentioned exercise, if followed with the *right intention,* operates in the sense of creating a predisposition to follow the process consciously and to "introduce the Self to the subtle state."

However, we need to be aware that in the natural state this detachment is not complete: the subtle body still maintains a certain connection with the physical body that it animates, and the resonance in it of the subconscious impulses and the processes (both normal and abnormal) of the organism creates the world of dreams. It becomes free only in part, and enters into contact with the supersensible world; but many other possibilities of knowledge and action that might derive from this are paralyzed, due to the subsistence of that partial connection with the life of the organic subconscious, responsible for creating ordinary dreams.

Thus it is necessary to aim at a *full* and *conscious* detachment, creating a different polarization of the fluidic body in respect to the physical body. This may be attempted by those who have already obtained some results from the previous exercise (e.g., a sense of vague luminosity fluctuating during sleep) and have already established a certain contact with the subtle body itself, following what has been said in chapter III. This is what needs to be done next. Before falling asleep, after having contemplatively accompanied the sun's ascent to the zenith and one's own ascent to the peak of the "mountain" at "high noon," *it is necessary to visualize an image of one's own body in the exact position in which it is found, tie it to the sense of the subtle body, and then imagine a slow movement of the image, until it reaches*

the opposite position. For instance, if the body lies on the left side, imagine a slow rotation until you *feel it as if it were lying on the right side*. After that, fall asleep. Due to the power of this practice, it is possible that, in the subtle body, even the partial dependence on the organic life will be suspended.

The condition for the efficacy of this ritual is to go toward sleep without tiredness, with a calm and serene mind, with an inner desire of elevation and illumination, almost with a sense of veneration and trust toward the mystery hidden by sleep. The usual attitude with which one heads toward sleep, to abandon oneself, relax, and let oneself go in a need for physical satisfaction, operates in exactly the opposite way to that aimed at by these practices.

And now, some general principles that we recommend to the serious attention of those who practice initiatic disciplines:

1. Desire, hope, expectations, inexorably lead away from results; 2. All of the esoteric exercises are fruitful only when they are loved and willed for their own sake, almost as if they had a purpose in and of themselves; 3. The persistent lack of results even after constant and serious efforts may be just a test; 4. To find all of this natural is already a result.

Abraxas

Instructions for the "Awareness of Breath"

Lie down horizontally.
Relax your body.

1) Realize that if someone were to lift your arm, it would fall back, as if it were dead weight.

2) Realize that if someone were to push your body from where it lies, it would tumble around on the earth like an inanimate object.

3) Realize that you could no longer move your body, even if you wanted to: it lies very heavy, inert. Abandon it, no longer concern yourself with it.

With calm and resolve, converge into yourself. Turn toward the threshold of "silence." After nothing exists but clarity and awareness of consciousness, come back until you feel the slightest sensation of your body.

You will then notice that your breath, in the meantime, has slowed down and is now almost imperceptible. At this point:

1) Evoke the image of air: a free thing, without origin or cause, without bonds, infinite, fleeting, penetrating all things, susceptible to sudden variations, without supports (see the essay by Leo in chapter II).

2) Having done this, very slowly reawaken the breath without "touching" your body—namely with an *act of the mind* and not with a movement of the muscles.

If your soul is ripe, it may undergo a TRANSFORMATION, called *Knowledge of the Air* and also *Knowledge of Prana (pranavidya)*.

a) The habitual sense of your self in the body will be *overthrown*. You will no longer feel as body and *in* the body, but you will be *air*, space; an air by which you will feel the heavy and inanimate mass of the body being carried, moved, and penetrated.

b) Formerly you felt the air moved by your lungs, namely by an activity of the body. Now you will find that the air causes the lungs to move: it moves the body in the material function of breath, and regulates the flow of the blood in it, giving it life.

c) The function of breath will then be transformed from *automatism* into an *act* of the living spirit.

If, after all this, you *fix* the breath coming and going, it will appear to you as *light* ("The Life was the light of men"; John 1:4).

If, when proceeding, you penetrate with breath the "frozen," *petrified* sensation of the form or the structure of your immobile body, what will emerge is the waving perception of a *body made of luminous mobility*. It is the ethereal or fluidic ☿, as "matter in the white state."

If, finally, after achieving your magical dignification, you fix the breath and, as an act of the spirit, focalize it in your lungs, becoming a point without dimensions, what will emerge silently, in a new vision, is the *Archangel of Air*.

In the habitual life of every day, beginning with these experiences, you will experience a sense of wonderful physical lightness and of freedom.

You will be given a natural power of overcoming fatigue and weariness that will appear miraculous to others.

You will also suddenly "see" flashing points in the air.

In the evening, when getting ready to go to sleep, something like silent and luminous explosions may occur in your eyes.

Observe everything carefully and objectively, and *be silent*.

It has been said: "You may practice breathing techniques for decades and be very successful at it, but until you actualize *prana* from your breathing, and until the breathing process has been dematerialized and given in function of the flow of the currents of animated life, all of your efforts will be in vain."

Oso

Notes on the Logos

When in the course of subtle operations, one shifts from the sphere of intellectual knowledge (*intuslegere,* literally "inner reading"), which necessarily unfolds in PHYSICAL TIME (the first dimension of "time") through a series of logically connected thoughts, to the sphere of the imagination or of knowledge acquired through images[52] (*imum ago* = *imago* = to act or to operate through *imum* or depth), one then passes from *reading what is inside one's self* to *acting upon what is inside one's self.* Thus, the practitioner enters through spiritual inspiration into the sphere of DURATION or psychic time (the second dimension of "time").

I will not discuss in detail here the third sphere of the operation, in which one not only reads and acts upon what is inside oneself, but really *is* cosmic interiority; this domain actualizes itself in ETERNITY, or causal time (the third dimension of "time"). This knowledge can be attained by man only in an *instant,* and it is called spiritual intuition (in Latin *intueor* = *intus-eor* = I am led within = I am led into = I am identifying with = I am this or that). In this case one can no longer speak of knowing something, but rather of being something. The relative operation consists in transferring oneself into other beings.

For now it suffices to talk about DURATION, which is that state of time that manifests itself as *simultaneity.* That which has happened, that which is happening, and that which will happen are triply *present* (obviously in the impersonal domain) and weave with their triplicity the true and authentic *space,* of which our tri-dimensional space is nothing but the image reflected in time. This must be explained further.

Whenever our eyes or thoughts span over a certain "space," they unavoidably take a certain amount of time, as little as it may be. This is reflected space, or physical space. Conversely, in psychic or soul space, whose

52. Cf. the essay by Luce in chapter III.

real name is *duration,* physical or chronological time either no longer exists or is greatly diminished. The series no longer exists, but rather the form-image, whose body is woven from time. In other words, what exists is the *figure,* or better, the *figures* of time. These figures appear to psychic sight as beings consisting of a lucent and transparent psychic body (just as earthly bodies are woven from opaque and dense matter). These translucent psychic bodies carry in the inner depths *(imum ago)* the simultaneous activity of "past," "present," and "future" events, which are the actions they have already performed, as well as their current and future actions: i.e., the actions of these beings.

We could say that while the profile or the external contours of these images (forms) are of relatively stable brightness (hence their form), the inner lines that transpire from these images on the various planes of their various degrees of depth are movement. This movement actualizes and manifests itself as *sound.* It is an inner sound that is perceptible only to an absolutely inner ear, which is properly called the "ear of the heart."

These bright images resound from their interiority-in-motion to various depths of transparency, and these depths are what these images were, are, and will be. They *speak of time;* but they are really speaking at three simultaneous "tempi," and this triple temporality resounds synchronously in a single inner dynamism that we can only call "*becoming.*" However, their becoming has a threefold scope as well. The unfolding of their own essence, resounding in sonorous spheres that spread outwards (first scope), encounters other sounds from other figures (or images), which temper them, at times harmonizing with them in a polyphonic way, at other times interfering with and silencing each other. They are actualized in this (real) musical drama, on this plane of simultaneity, both as consonant (harmony, equilibrium, love) and as dissonant elements (aversion, struggle, war). In this reciprocity (second scope of sound) they appear as real actions, in which the prevailing of one or another of these images causes the underlying psychic sound to precipitate into the physical sphere underneath it (third scope), thus becoming arrested, so to speak, and fixed as materiality in the external world.

The *corpses* of this cosmic struggle are the "things" and "beings" that we see with our physical eyes.

All of the objects and forms around us that we are able to perceive with

our senses are nothing but arrested sounds, dead sounds, words bewitched into matter. We can indeed reawaken them in our consciousness, and even transform them into living words in our inner sound-world, through redeeming operations of the inner word, which are called *mantras,* magical formulas, mystical voices, or enchanting syllables. [We must keep in mind, however, that the *mantra,* or formula, is only the leverage and the instrument necessary to resuscitate the "crucified" sound; the *mantra* itself is not this sound, which exists only in the living, inspired content of the awakened individual, and thus is always creative *(in becoming)* and can never be repeated in stereotyped formulas.]

The "death" of these sounds in the visible form is not, per se, an absolute death; it is a death relative to the sonorous archetype of which the external form is only an image (symbol): it is a death that in reality is only the silencing of inner echoes, and thus expulsion from the paradise of absolute activity, halted by temporary inertia. (Therefore, when we perceive the world in a material way and do not realize that we are merely perceiving *symbols,* in reality we are only perceiving an illusion, or *mâyâ*). The state of silence, or relative inertia, goes through four progressively dense stages. These stages correspond to four degrees of progressive descent into natural reality:

1. *Mineral kingdom.* The only aspect of sound that has descended into it is the absolute and instantaneous act of its own halting. The only thing left of sound in the mineral nature is *density,* or specific or atomic weight, whose primary and vital modifications are first chemical combinations (in physical esotericism, the essence of the archetypal sound is called "chemical ether") and then "electromagnetic" relationships, such as gravity, equilibrium, statics, cohesion, molecular attraction, etc. [In human consciousness this state corresponds to a state of sleep deeper than the ordinary dreamless sleep, which we call coma, catalepsis, trance, or apparent death (= skeleton).]

2. *Plant kingdom.* The element of sound that has descended into it, besides the act of coming to a halt, has reached the next stage, namely the phases arranged in a series of a descent that appear in inverse order in the plant kingdom as developmental phases, ranging from vegetal growth to flowering. After the flower, we have the decline, through the fruit and the drying up, as far as the desiccation and mineral disintegration of the plant.

In humans this state corresponds to a deep sleep without dreams (= glandular system).

3. *Animal kingdom.* The element of sound has reached not only the act of coming to a standstill, and the sucessive proceedings of the standstill, but also the renunciation of resonance, which is circumscribed in a self-subsisting, separated, objective *form.* An animal exists in its totality in its form *(species),* but its movement is only apparent. This is because while in the *species* (the visibility of the form) we find the manifestation of the typical instinct of each species, the movement of the animal (for example, in comparison to a plant, which only grows or develops) is a being moved by its own form and not a real movement. Movement is rather the image of what the animal does not have inside, but outside itself: it is the symbol of what has not descended into it, and which operates on it, forming it from the outside, as instinct, as wisdom that is reflected in it, translated into movement (automatic movement in respect to the consciousness of the single animal). The animal is dreamed into motion by beings whose very essence *is* movement: hence it looks as if the animal is moving *itself,* though in reality it is being moved. Just as a man, when he sleeps, dreams of moving around even though he is not the author of those movements (I am not talking here of someone who is superconscious, but of a normal, average person), likewise the *form* of the animal is a dream-in-motion, or a dream dreamed by beings, whose dream creates animals of sounds that, being halted by opposing forces, descend into physical animal species on earth.

4. *Human kingdom.* The entire sound descends into it as the inner, autonomous life in the single individual. The act of coming to a halt (density), being pervaded by its own descending process (development), and by its own renunciation of resonance (form), also takes into itself the *movement* of the entire process. The meaning of this movement is remodulated from within the human being, and externalized as language. Human language (by "language" I mean every system of expressive signs, including the various arts) is the image of the Logos. As I have said, in man we find the meaning of the entire process of sound (namely of *cosmic becoming*), and this is expressed in the entire range of human movements, and in the entire bodily system. When we look at a person, we see not only a density in the process of development, with a form that expresses a certain interi-

ority, but we also always see a form in movement, which moves itself (even during rest) *in order to accept and to externalize individually the universal meaning.*

This entire state of speaking awareness, in man, is the state of *perfect wakefulness*. In other words, *Homo erectus,* who while in movement reveals *his own* interiority as universal interiority: this is Man.

Everyone is aware of the morphological view, according to which a plant's leaf is nothing but a small-scale plant, and conversely, the plant is nothing but a leaf on a large scale. Likewise, the bodily form of a human being is nothing but his or her own organ of language, just as the organ of language is, on a small scale, the entire person. Since man assumes and summarizes in himself the previous states (mineral, vegetal, and animal), by following this path we can arrive, through progressive intensity, at the transcendent perception that in human speech lives out the echoing essence of all the forms of the universe.

This suggests the essence of the meaning of human *freedom;* this meaning arises from the consciousness of being able to ascend or descend along the ladder of beings (all the way down to the minerals [and below], and all the way up to the Father) through its triple inner being (thought, feelings, will). This being lives in unitary but distinct movements (relationships between various human organs) and speaks in external movements (words, works, activities, movements of the limbs, acts of superconsciousness). These faculties in synthesis give it the power to pull down creatures from the archetypal sound into the *sensible form* (word-form), the beings of creation into its own human creations. They also give this being the power to free and to send on their way to the original sound of the Logos, outside the boundaries of the physical-natural form, the beings already created, in the creative Word of the hierarchies. From here radiates the deep sense according to which aspects and beings of the world are nothing but *names;* and that the name of names is *Man,* entirely aware of the cosmic word individuated in the Self.

One of the final thoughts of my essay: what truly matters is not so much that all things can be transported to the plane of the conscious word, and be *translated* into words; rather, the opposite is true, namely that the aspects and beings of the world (creatures, objects, angels, demons, etc.)

are nothing in themselves, but the more or less alphabetized (fixed) letters of the universal language, and of the Logos.

Man really (and only) expresses his entire being in this alphabet, in progressive movement toward the conscious actualization of his own being, which is not a being determined by the world, but on the contrary an articulator, a redeemer, a creator of the world. Creatures and things are arrested human words. The fact that man walks around, with physical feet, in the well-established forest of his own inner movements (which have become external to himself), is the proof of the loss of the conscience of the unity between himself and the world. It is also the *measure* of the inner obstacles (namely the illusions) that he must overcome in order to recognize and activate the Logos in himself, and then to restore external nature outside himself to the state of the Logos.

Therefore it is certain that everything, in its original principle (not yet in time) and in the consubstantial principle of the substances and aspects of the external world, is absolutely Living Word. By slowly transforming this world of death that surrounds him into Living Word, man feeds on his heavenly Bread, of which the earthly bread is only a symbol, bewitched into heavy matter.

Arom

First Experiences

At the age of thirty-five, after years of hard and painful experiences, a strange book with an even stranger title, namely *Dogma and Ritual of High Magic* by Eliphas Levi, motivated me to learn about the esoteric sciences.

This book made a deep impression on me, producing an internal sensation of "being called."

Since that time many years have gone by; I have read a great number of similar publications. A great stack of books, some of which were more important and dear to me, seemed to suggest to me: "Try! Dare! The kingdom of God is under siege and becomes the reward for those who know how to conquer it."

I made up my mind to apply myself resolutely to practice, with a conscious and firm will. I achieved unexpected results almost right away.

Should I talk about this at greater length? Maybe I should, considering that there are many people who limit themselves to reading and who are therefore either skeptical or lost in fantasies. Very few people dare to transform the heart of secret teachings into an *experience*.

As I said, I achieved some results almost instantly. Now I must add that my mind's natural stability, the sense of reality I am endowed with, a spirit ever alert and awake during practice, and the absence of any mediumistic tendencies lead me to exclude the presence of any "abnormal" or "fantasized" element in my experience.

I have experienced the entire phenomenology discussed in the preceding pages, especially in the writings of Meyrink and Abraxas, in the same order and with the same growing intensity as they were presented, from the first tremors of the flesh immobilized by the will, to the proud and terrifying vision of one's own "Self," which is as bright and present as the first day of its apparition.

Today, I can talk with ease about *"this thing,"* though I must confess that I would not have been able to do so awhile ago. My education, based on a rather nebulous "occult" literature, had either not sufficiently prepared

me for the true reality of the phenomena, or falsified it. Thus I committed many mistakes in the process of evaluation, which I was able to overcome only with a good dose of courage.

I will not discuss here at length the methods I employed. It will suffice to say that I spent a few years alternating study with a slow and tenacious attempt to gain a greater control of my thought, and be purified from the "being of desire." I also practiced focusing, meditation, and concentration exercises, combining them, as I saw fit, with breathing exercises.

In 1925 I had the first manifestations. One day, after meditation, I suddenly saw some comma-shaped luminosities spinning very rapidly in a circular pattern. In other exercises, these "commas" became even brighter, eventually merging into a single cloud behind which I could see a dark, opaline background with a very bright light in the center of it.[53] As I continued to practice, the dimensions of the phenomenon grew in size: I often had the sensation of the *presence* of a force sucking me in, against which I reacted unconsciously.

I applied myself to constant exercises of accumulation of *prana* through rhythmical breathing (sometimes accompanied by *mantras*) and concentration, which lasted for months. One day, as I was meditating in a dark room in the midafternoon, I awoke to the sense of a radiant spot located in the middle of my forehead: it was almost like a source of living fire activated by the work of my mind (☉) and potentized breath of prana (☿).

At that point I first experienced what some schools call the *"state of the waters,"* in which pale ghosts and shiny jellyfish shapes float around.

For several nights my room looked as if it were flooded with flashes, of little suns that arose everywhere to blaze for an instant and then disappear. A persistent opaline light erased all contours, and even the walls of the room seem to disappear. At times there was a darkness pierced by sudden streaks of red light radiating in every direction; strange black shadows, sometimes huge, appeared in the background, while other radiant forms of light came close to me, going through and past me, causing my body to feel coldness and heat. This feeling was followed by a lucid calm in which

53. We find a similar expression in an alchemical text (Dorn, *Specul. philosoph.*, in *Theatrum Chemicum*, I, 275): "Then, with the eyes of the mind he will see a number of sparks, getting bigger every day, growing into a great light."

every dark form disappeared; bright entities entered into the picture, remaining still long enough for me to see their features in my mind.

How was I to regard these apparitions? Once I had aroused them, how could I get rid of them? How could I rest amid such a festival of lights? Those who have had the same experience know that it is useless to close one's eyes, since *this sight does not occur through physical eyes, and this sound is not perceived through physical ears.* How could I stop the feeling of floating like a feather, even though I was perfectly aware of lying still on the bed?

And what about the sensation of possessing a radiant center of light between my eyes, throwing sparks of fire on everything and everywhere? What should I make of the emergence of my own image, traced in lines of fire on the black background of the night?

Now I can calmly regard my fears and see that they were futile, since I have learned how to dominate them. But that was not the case at the time; even now I would not dare to laugh at them, considering how intense those manifestations were.

Exhausted by the long tension, in the early morning, after a short sleep, I finally woke up. And then, as a reward for the hard struggle, I suddenly had a transfigured and novel view of nature. My half-open eyes could see things and beings in a new light, with such a meaning and richness as I had never been aware of before and that no words could possibly convey. I perceived, in the freedom of contemplation, the deep forces of nature and of life. Although I had been a passionate student of natural sciences, I had never known anything quite like it before. Nothing could compare in fullness, richness of details, organic and direct connection with everything that I was experiencing effortlessly, while my being was in a totally neutral state.

These experiences may not mean much in comparison to those that others have and still are experiencing.

Nevertheless, I am firmly convinced that I have opened a path to higher conquests for myself. As of today I can say that *I know.* Now it is a matter of using this knowledge and being able to operate in that world, the doors of which have been opened to me.

Is this presumption on my part? A deep-seated voice tells me it is not. It tells me that I am on the right path, that the first steps have been made and that now what matters is to have sufficient strength to press onward.

Ea

The Problem of Immortality

In the following pages we will briefly show how the problem of survival and even that of immortality are presented from an initiatic point of view. This perspective, as has been said, is essentially one of *experience* and of *reality*.

The first point to be made is: *For what,* for which entity, is there a question of whether or not there is survival of death? Here we do not want to speak about some abstract entity conceived by philosophy or theology, but rather one that exists concretely, namely what may be called the *living consciousness.* This is an individuated consciousness that, in practice, derives the sense of itself from its relationship to a unified psychophysical organism, as well as from sensible experience in general.

Now, to affirm the survival, if not immortality, of such a consciousness cannot be done mindlessly. Rather, one must take into account the degree to which the faculties of such a consciousness, including those who are the basis of its organized unity, are affected by bodily contingencies. We can see that already in sleep, due to the disappearance of sense perceptions, consciousness also disappears, or remains only in its reduced form of commonplace dreaming. True, one awakens from sleep and consciousness returns, but this is only because the organic unity subsists. However, we should not ignore the data of pathology. There are some illnesses that gradually affect the organic unity, advancing but also regressing, making one feel health and life again, but only to continue their course. It has rightly been suggested that in such cases one has the successive impressions of being born and then of dying; as the illness progresses, one has a sort of *experience of death;* one comes close enough, through what in mathematics is called convergence to the limit, as to have a presentiment of the feeling of death, experienced as sinking and dissolution.[54]

54. On these anticipations of the experience of death in some organic illnesses, see J. M. Guyau, *Esquisse d'une morale sans obligation ni sanction,* Paris, 1885, ch. I, sect. I, para. II.

In reality, it would not be legitimate to expect anything else, since we are dealing with a consciousness that is amalgamated with the animal vitality. Therefore the problem ought to be framed in different terms: we should see in what cases and under what conditions we could find in a person something *really* different, something more than what is usually called "living consciousness." Here the initiatic teaching is clearly different from the majority of religious views (at least in their exoteric meaning), since it does not posit the problem of survival and immortality in abstract and generic terms—for man in general—but rather with an eye to various possibilities and conditions.

If in fact we are not dealing with an organized and centralized consciousness, such as we think of when we refer to the "Self," it may be generally admitted that something survives the crisis and sinking of death. Just as the physical organism does not disappear into the void but first produces a corpse, then the products of its dissolution, which follow various chemico-physical laws, much the same must apply to the "psychic" part of man: that after death, a "psychic" corpse or a sort of facsimile of the personality of the deceased survives for some time, which in some cases may give rise to various manifestations. These manifestations of either the psychic corpse or some of its parts (in the event that its successive disintegration has already occurred) are naively assumed by spiritualists as "empirical" proofs of the survival of the soul; however, upon closer examination they would instead demonstrate the opposite. The automatic character of these surviving and now impersonal forces does not prevent the above-mentioned manifestations from having a particular intensity. This is the case, for instance, when feelings, passions, deep inclinations were awakened during life and nourished until death. It is these forces that *carry* the empty image of the deceased, replacing its "Self," as was the case, after all, in his lifetime, though to a lesser degree. They are always "elementary" actions that have nothing to do with what may be called the spiritual personality of the deceased.[55]

55. There is another case to be considered, in which the psychic residues and the facsimile are animated and assumed by dark forces from the otherworld. This can explain a greater number of parapsychological phenomena than one might think. Finally, there are possibilities afforded by *necromancy*, in which the operator lends his life and "Self" to a ghost, temporarily lifting it up from that faint existence which in the classical traditions corresponded to Hades.

The employment of this last expression requires a clarification, since it obviously implies something more than what is called a living consciousness. In the context of ontology, it is clear that without any relation with a transcendent principle not only man, but no being in the natural world could enjoy an existence, not even an illusory one. From an initiatic point of view it must be said that one feels a "Self" precisely because of the *reflection* of a superior principle; and the conditional nature of ordinary consciousness may be understood as that existing between a reflected image and the means by which that image is formed. Between the two there is a strict relation that defines and even organizes what in Hindu terms may be called the "Self of the elements" or, better yet, the "samsâric Self,"[56] while the corresponding notion in classical terminology is the soul, as opposed to the *nous:* the mind seen as an Olympian and incorruptible principle.

When a mirror is broken, it does not affect the object reflected in it, but its image disappears. It is in these terms that we must interpret the phenomenon of death, when it has only a negative outcome, as has been said concerning the living consciousness. In this case, that which has the nature of a human Self does not survive. More precisely, what occurs is radical change of state; besides the ghostly and psychic residues mentioned above, which are automatisms that continue to exist out of inertia, that which is properly the life of the samsâric Self is reabsorbed into a subpersonal stock, which may be defined as a "root-being." On this plane it is again possible to conceive of a survival *sui generis,* since this being has not only given life to a certain body, but may also give it to others, both before and after it. At the dissolution of a given psychophysical aggregation and reflection of the Self carried by it, that force persists, becomes latent, as the potential of a fire capable of being kindled anew, which signifies a new individual, a new existence. Naturally, here it is not only a case of the species and the biological stock, nor of the lives produced by the same blood through sexual generation. The existences that are various manifestations of that being, with very rare exceptions, may appear absolutely detached and extraneous to each other. What connects them is a nexus that escapes the physical senses, an invisible nexus that does not have a material basis. Here we must confine ourselves to this brief men-

56. A very expressive term used by the Gnostics to define this very principle is that of *counterfeit spirit.*

tion, which is necessary for an overall orientation, since the problem of the relationship between the various legacies that man incorporates would take us too far at this point, but may be treated on another occasion.

In any event, not the least reason for this mention is the need to dispel the misunderstanding about *reincarnation,* a view that, unlike what many contemporary "spiritualists" and Theosophists think, does not correspond at all to an esoteric teaching. That which appears to refer to it in many Eastern and Western texts is only a symbolic and popular way of expressing a doctrine with an altogether different meaning. Generally speaking, it is a contradiction in terms that a "samsâric Self" (which for the great majority of cases is what passes for someone's "Self") may reincarnate. It is a contradiction because the relative identity of such a Self consists only in function of a given psychophysical organism, namely in function of a given combination that, once dissolved, will never reappear in the same way. That which continues in a series of existences is not what is produced, but the producing force, namely the subpersonal power mentioned before. In other words: if we were to call A, B, C, etc., the "Selves" that have taken form in various existences of the series, it is not A that reincarnates in B and then in C and so on, but rather it is the force that has acted in A and into which A is dissolved again that manifests itself again in B, and then in C, etc. The *continuity* falls exclusively on the side of this force that is not a Self nor the living consciousness. However, if by virtue of some miraculous operation, A (the Self of a given existence) could see before itself B and C, etc., namely the beings that are its supposed "reincarnations," they would and must appear to it as extraneous, as other people or Selves, distinct from it in space.

The plane on which reincarnation may be true is the samsâric plane (the world of the Waters, the Hellenic "cycle of necessity"), and thus it has nothing to do with that of the spiritual personality. Thus, let me say in passing, there are good reasons to be suspicious of any doctrine that gives preeminence to the idea of reincarnation, unless its purpose is only the practical one of creating a background in order to highlight the entirely contrary direction, the one leading to "liberation." I am not denying that there are special experiences that may lend some sort of proof to the doctrine of reincarnation: it is just a matter of interpreting them correctly. Similar experiences have become extremely rare these days, especially in the West, due to the fact that the individual Self has assumed an increasingly rigid form,

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evermore closing in on itself. However, it is possible, thanks to some sudden insight, or through initiatic practices, to remove the limitation and gain a certain awareness of the deeper root of one's own life. Then what arises is the *samsâric consciousness,* which may even assume the likeness of a memory; in the deep, subpersonal trunk, there really exists the memory of other existences, of those that, in a discontinuous series of "Selves," arose as ephemeral manifestations of the same, unexhausted trunk. But the only meaning of this is as a temporary removal from the individual consciousness and of a kind of "descent into hell." This corresponds, from case to case, either to a regression or to a certain (albeit virtual) superindividuality. In fact, once the limit of individual consciousness is removed, it would follow that the same consciousness, if awake, would be lost, as when sleeping, and no experience would be possible. Only due to a sort of echo of more ancient states did a samsâric semiconsciousness subsist in the East, which attenuated that feeling of the one and only earthly life of the Self that in the West represents the normal and common view. But if we are not speaking of regressions or fringes of a consciousness that has not been entirely defined and stabilized, samsâric consciousness should be regarded as a form of initiatic consciousness.[57] The reader may recall that in the original Buddhist texts, where mention is made of the vision of multiple lives, this recollection is connected in an unequivocal way to stages of high contemplation. It is an experience that presupposes *detachment.*

We have now reached the very heart of the initiatic problem of survival and the doctrine of the conditional nature both of survival and of immortality. To describe the Self, we have used the image of a reflection connected to the means through which this reflection occurred. We may now imagine a return from the reflection to its source, which is something that implies a separation, a revulsion, a detachment, corresponding to a change of state and a deep crisis. What occurs is more or less as in death: a failing of the habitual support supplied by the body and the samsâric vitality. Such is the *initiatic death,* which may well be described as a death, in effect, realized in an experimental way, occurring after the initiate has been endowed with a power capable of supporting his consciousness.[58] He who has undergone this death has ceased to be a mere man: he is no longer tied

57. See the essay by Abraxas in the first chapter.

58. The Hermetic *separatio* (separation), which in the texts is described as a "mortification" or as "death," has precisely this meaning. We may also recall the text in St. Paul

to an individual form; his "Self" no longer is a reflection, but rather a *being*. He has actualized the "spiritual personality." Having done that, the support of the physical body and of sensible experience may fail without the individual consciousness becoming dissolved and sinking. Thus the *positive* condition for survival of death is realized, and it can eventually be corraborated by cross-checking. In certain conditions, what may be induced are states in which one can say: "Everything that comes to me from the world of the senses is suppressed, and yet I perceive my consciousness to be clear, transparent, and intangible." In regard to the character of concreteness of the initiatic transformation, it will suffice to remember the saying that scandalized many people in already "enlightened" ancient Greece, namely that if a criminal is initiated at Eleusis, his destiny after death cannot be compared to that awaiting the most virtuous or famous man, such as Epaminondas. In fact, despite all the improvements that can be made on an elephant, it will never become a cat. They are two different species. The initiatic mystery is precisely that of metamorphosis, of the passage from one species to another.

At this point we should emphasize strongly that conscious survival after death is not to be automatically equated with *immortality*. This leads us back to the theory of the hierarchy of worlds and of states of being, and also to the so-called cyclical laws. We shall only briefly mention these here. The only Immortal, in an absolute sense, is the Unconditioned, the principle beyond all manifestation. Immortality thus exists only as "Olympian" immortality in a higher sense, proceeding from a state of union with the Unconditioned. Those who have already realized the conditions for survival may aim for this supreme goal. But it is not certain that they will succeed. One can try while alive to achieve the complete "liberation" that makes one immortal. Some possibilities are offered at the moment of death. Others are offered in posthumous states, in which the knowledge and consciousness of the initiate, unlike those of ordinary people, continue to exist. In order to achieve immortality, it is necessary to *burn* every tendency that would urge one to assume this or that superhuman "seat" ("angelic," one

(Hebrews 4:13) that says: "The word of God is a *living sword*, which penetrates even to *dividing* soul and spirit, and sunders the mind from the motions of the heart." Origen (*De principiis*, III, 3) talks about a soul of the flesh—the "samsâric Self"—as opposed to the spirit, adding that it is connected to a "person's blood." Cf. the initiatic expression: "To chill the blood."

might say, or "heavenly") since all this, from an initiatic point of view, still belongs to the manifested, conditioned state, and not to the unconditioned, and has no "eternal" character. If the struggle for immortality occurred in truly a magical context, the task would consist of resisting the beings whom one encounters (they are personifications of certain modes of being), by generating, in their exact direction, a higher intensity than theirs. Here the principle is that once a *relationship* has been established, to fail to dominate means to become dominated immediately, and hence bound to a given existential condition. But even on the magical path, at the summit the force must become transfigured into pure light, into "liberation."

Overall, it is necessary to trace a clear demarcation line between those who survive and the "immortals" on the one hand, and the overwhelming majority of people on the other. This is what not only the initiatic schools but also almost all ancient religions have always acknowledged. The idea that everybody possesses an "immortal soul," conceived moreover as a facsimile of his living consciousness and individual earthly Self, is a true ideological aberration, although its usefulness as opium for the masses at times cannot be denied.

What is capable of surviving death and being immortal is not the "soul" but the mind as *nous*, as a supernatural element. But it is useless to talk about it and say that it is indestructible and eternal when there is no contact and no continuity between the consciousness living in the samsâric reflection and such a principle. The "soul" may survive only when it joins the "mind," becoming the *enduring and unfailing soul* mentioned by Agrippa. This is the *metabole*, the change of polarity, of which initiation is the starting point. The soul, instead of leaning on the natural being, leans on the supernatural being and becomes integrated with it. In this way a new form is created, which is not affected by death. Once the body disintegrates, rather than the spectral residue, this form becomes free, as a "body" of incorruptible light. It corresponds to the energy that, through appropriate transformations, will eventually be manifested on the plane of being that befits the particular "knowledge" and "dignity" of the initiate. Moreover, everything of the individual consciousness that has been integrated into the *enduring and unfailing soul* will escape death and create a sort of substratum of continuity, which, incidentally, as Agrippa suggests, is also the active principle in every operation of higher magic.

VI

Leo

Beyond the Threshold of Sleep

In ordinary human experience, sleep is the voiding of consciousness and a sort of apparent death, barely illuminated by the mirage of dreams. The deeper the sleep and the more consciousness is submerged, the more one is satisfied, as if the ideal condition had been achieved.

But when a greater introversion is achieved; when the inner life, after being strengthened, becomes most important; and when the external world ceases to be experienced as the only center of interest—at that point one vaguely perceives that life during sleep is a continuation of the waking state, rather than a pause in it, an integration of the waking state rather than a sudden, periodic, and unintelligible interruption.

It is useless to look for an explanation of the mystery of sleep when one is not capable of a change in the orientation of individual consciousness. Scientific theories that have tried to explain this enigma have failed because they tried to explain it with the means that are commonly employed in research into external phenomena. No explanation has ever been found in the physical body as such, since nothing really happens when one falls asleep: the body undergoes sleep, and the real change is obviously not in the physical and bodily order. Something invisible wanders away from the body and takes consciousness along with it. The ordinary vital phenomena continue, but the connection of the psychic life with the brain is interrupted.

In regard to what has been said so far about the "subtle body," we may note a kind of splitting occurring in it. A group of forces in it, aimed at giving life and form, remains in the physical body when it is asleep, thus differentiating it from a cadaver. The group of forces that presides over thought, feeling, and the various impulses to action appears to depart and to lead its own life. Thus the solution of this enigma cannot come from a

materialistic research nor from mere theoretical notions, but rather from a conquest of one's own consciousness, which is an amplification, a transformation, and the opening of one's eyes to a new, inner horizon.

As was mentioned before, the first step consists in a change of attitude toward the night and sleep. It is necessary to react against the tendency to let oneself go, and against the notion that the night is the kingdom of darkness. The night, on the contrary, is a cosmic awakening, the emergence, palpitation, and echo of spiritual forces overwhelmed by the force of physical solar light. During the night a *spiritual sun* rises, and our subtle body seeks it and tries to orient itself toward it. It is necessary to cultivate a sense of expectation for a form of life that is incommensurably freer and wider than ordinary life during wakefulness.

Here it is necessary to anticipate an objection and to answer it right away. One might say that such an attitude, which tries to turn sleep into some sort of superwakefulness, must interfere with what sleep is supposed to accomplish, namely rest and the restoration of the physical energies. But this is not the case. On the contrary, following this phase of the experience, the organic restoration emerges faster and more complete, since one enters into contact with the restoring forces and begins to cooperate with them. In this way, the need to "collapse" for eight or ten hours, after which one wakes up feeling drugged and "heavy," is done away with. After a few hours one will wake up spontaneously in a lively state, feeling refreshed, energized, and experiencing a sense of courage and active superiority when facing one's daily tasks.

After cultivating this attitude for a period of time, we need to take it one step further. In the process of falling asleep, when shifting from one state of consciousness to another, there is a moment of darkness and discontinuity that needs to be overcome. It is necessary to throw a bridge across to the other side of our Self, in its fullness of distinct being, as to another external world that lies beyond the world of physical senses. It is necessary to learn again the *art of falling asleep*.[59] In a previous essay entitled "Summary," we already mentioned something of this sort.

One should lie on the bed with the head somewhat elevated. Today's tendency to sleep with the head at the same level of the body, if not lower,

59. This art corresponds to the *art of dying*, no less neglected and lost for so long. (Note by UR)

is a very poor habit based on the mistaken assumption that "the more blood flows to the head, the better for the nervous system." In reality, a greater flow of blood causes a significant compression of the nervous substance. Moreover, from an initiatic perspective we know that blood is something more than the vehicle for repairing substances of the tissues: it is a fluid that carries with itself much of the external world in the form of obscure images, and it communicates them to the brain during the state of sleep, thus imparting a disorderly and irrational activity to it. It may even carry what is characteristic and pathological in the organs that it goes through, thus negatively affecting dreams.

On the contrary, if the flow of blood is not too strong, a properly trained brain is able to retain the necessary calm and receptivity needed in the morning to remember the experiences realized inside the subtle body.

Likewise, by now the stomach needs to be empty, since the pressure on the diaphragm and the solar plexus could disturb the organs corresponding to the centers of the subtle body, thus altering or inhibiting from the very start their receptivity to the rhythms.

I have already said that a body of forces remains in the body during sleep; if these forces were to leave the body too, sleep would be replaced by the cataleptic state. At first one should not try to detach this group of forces, but rather endow it with a certain mobility that makes it independent and more oriented toward the subtle than the physical body. What will follow is the establishment of a rhythmicization and a slowing down of breath and blood circulation, which constitutes a very favorable state for experiences during the life of sleep. The group of vital and formative forces will then function as an intermediary between the physical body and what the Self experiences in an immaterial way.

Under certain conditions this group of forces assumes the autonomy of a true vital body, which, as already stated, should enjoy a certain degree of mobility inside the physical body. The best moment to attempt to determine this mobility is as soon as sleep begins to set in. One must imagine to be able to *spin* around a hypothetical axis in the body (from left to right), and at the same time retain an image or symbol that refers to our spiritual nature and is attuned to a sense of the divine and to a sense of *elevation*. If it is possible to have a clear concept in the mind and to practice the exer-

cise for mobility in full consciousness when the detachment has already begun, one will first detect it in the hands and in the arms.

It is possible to conduct a lesser experiment to verify this. Hold an object in one hand and lean it outside the bed: at some point, you will feel that the object has fallen and realize that you have lost the sense of the position of the hand itself. If you fall asleep with the above-mentioned concept in mind for a sufficiently long time, in the morning you will wake up with that same concept + *x*. What I mean is that something will join this concept and become more distinct, remaining as a sense of our nocturnal cosmic life.

It is necessary not to be in a hurry to interpret things and to explain (clarity must come by itself, not through the physical brain), since every anticipation is bound to be a distortion. One's mind must be totally free, since it is possible that revelations will contrast with one's judgments and our desires during the wakeful state, concerning both oneself and other things. Criticism can come later. In the meantime we must slow down instinctive reactions and the inclination to understand according to the preordained patterns of our mind and feelings.

Naturally, this is not all there is to it. In reality *all* of our diurnal activities should also be properly oriented. I have set out some suggestions in chapters I and II, as well as in relation to the sense of the subtle body in chapter III. In those who have attained the necessary maturity, the rest will come of its own accord. They will spontaneously discover other attitudes and possible applications in daily life. The sense of an *inner light* will always remain in us, as a calm and constant feeling alongside our ordinary activities.

Also keep in mind that for every spiritual achievement, our sense of "bodily," or "animal ego"—which is very different from the true sense of Self— is fatal: in other words, the sense of self that is typical of one who aims to grab everything for himself in order to satisfy his nature as a limited and greedy being. *Sic nos non nobis* (thus we are not for ourselves) is the best attitude to assume. Those who turn back to contemplate what they have obtained and to enjoy it become paralyzed and are turned to stone, just like Lot's wife in the Bible; it becomes their downfall, like Narcissus, whose *being* died due to his love for his own *image*.

Ea

On the Magical View of Life

The title of the following essay should not induce the reader to attribute a universal validity to the ideas found therein. These are rather "truths" to be assumed in a given phase of the development, in view of a preliminary liberation and purification of the soul. Such a development may take this form especially in the "way of the warrior"—the kshatriya, *to use the Hindu term. Once the fruit of such a discipline has been achieved, various perspectives may change and the point of view proper to the true transcendent realization be accessed.* (Note by UR)

Self-overcoming, aside from being the object of rites, is connected to a renewed, heroicized *perception* of the world and of life, not as an abstract concept of the mind, but as something that pulsates in the rhythm of one's own blood. It is the sensation of the world as power, or the sensation of the world as a sacrificial act. A great freedom, with action as the sole law. Everywhere beings made of strength, and, at the same time, a cosmic breathing, a sense of height, of *airiness*.

Action needs to be liberated. It must be realized in and of itself, disinfected from mental fever, cleansed from hatred and craving. These truths must penetrate the soul: *there is no place to go to, nothing to ask for, nothing to hope for, nothing to fear.* The world is *free:* goals and reasons, "evolution," fate or providence—all that is fog, an invention by beings who did not yet know how to walk on their own and needed crutches and supports. Now you will be left to yourself. You must perceive yourself as a *center of strength* and know the action that is no longer dictated by this or that object, but for the sake of itself. You will no longer be moved: detached, you will

move. The objects around you will cease to be objects of desire for you—they will become objects of action. Gravitating around things that no longer exist, the impulses of an irrational life will finally become extinguished: what will fall is also the sense of effort, the habit of running around, of doing, the painful seriousness and need, the tragic sentiment and the Titanic bond: in other words the great disease itself, namely the *human* sense of life. A superior calm will ensue. From this will come action, pure and purifying action: it is an action ready, at any time and in any place, to take any direction. It is a flexible action, free toward itself, superior to winning and losing, success and failure, selfishness and altruism, happiness and misery; action released from bonds, from identification, from attachment.

In such an action you will be able to find *purification,* since according to it the "individual" no longer counts and because it takes you beyond both abstract knowledge and the irrational impetus of inferior forces. Not ghosts of concepts and ideas and "values"—but rather a *vision without reference points,* having as its only direct object *reality itself.* Action awakened as an *elementary* thing, simple, unrestrained. Power of commanding and power of obeying: both absolute, to be quintessentialized in the way that is required for evocations and identifications, as for those immediate, immaterial encounters with "presences," in which some may ascend and disappear, powerful and invisible, while others precipitate into bodily forms.

In ordinary life it is necessary to follow a discipline capable of realizing the uselessness of all sentimentalism and all emotional complications. In their place, a clear gaze and an appropriate action. As with a surgeon, instead of compassion and mercy, an operation that solves the problem. As with a warrior or athlete, instead of fear and irrational agitation in the face of danger, the instant resolve of doing what lies in one's power. Mercy, fear, hope, impatience, anxiety—these are all spiritual *cave-ins* that nourish occult and vampiric powers of negation. Take compassion, for instance: it does not eliminate anything from the other's misfortune, but allows it to perturb your spirit. If you can, then act: assume the person of the other and give him your strength. Otherwise detach yourself. It is the same for hatred: when you hate, you degrade yourself. If you desire, if your sense of justice demands it, tear down and cut away, without your spirit becoming perturbed. Moreover, remember that by hating you decline. Hatred alters and it prevents you from controlling the influence of your opponent; worse

yet it opens you to his own influence, which you can instead know and paralyze, if you remain calm, without reacting. Those who want the *knowledge* and the *power* of good and evil must slay their "passion" for "good" or for "evil." They need to be able to give as a pure act, as an absolute gift, not for the enjoyable feeling of sympathy or mercy; they need to be able to strike down without hatred. "I am in the strong ones the strength that is free from desire and passion"—*balam balvatâm asmi kâmarâgavivarjitam*—this is what Krishna says about himself as that *force* and *purity* over which nothing has power, before which even the law of action and reaction can no longer take hold.[60] As soon as that fever, the dark force of instinct, of craving or aversion, removes one from this central inner disposition, even the greatest of the gods is ruined.

Detachment, silence, solitude—this is what prepares the liberation of this view of life and of the world.

Distance between human beings. Not to recognize oneself in others: never feeling superior, equal, or inferior to them. In this world, beings are alone, without law, with no escape, without excuse, clothed only in their strength or weakness: peaks, stones, sand. This is the first liberation of the view of life. To overcome the brotherly contamination, the need to love and to feel loved, to feel together, to feel equal and joined with others. Purge yourself of this. Beginning at a certain point you will not feel united with somebody because of blood, affections, country, or human destiny. You will feel united only with those who are on your same path, which is not the human path, having no regard for human ways.

When you look around, try to perceive the *voice of what is inanimate.* "How beautiful they are, these free forces that have not yet been stained by the spirit!" (Nietzsche)

Do not say these forces are "not yet," but rather *"no longer"* stained with "spirit," and understand that by "spirit" is meant what is "unreal." In other words, everything that man, with his sentiments, thoughts, fears, and hopes has projected onto nature in order to render it more intimate, or in order to make it speak the same language. Abandon all this and try to understand the message of things, especially where they appear foreign,

60. *Bhagavad Gita,* 2:38, 47–48; 3:30; 7:11.

naked, mute—where they have no soul because they are something greater than "soul." This is the first step toward the liberation of the view of the world. On the plane of *magic* you will know a world that has returned to the free, intensive, and essential state, in a state in which nature is not nature, nor the spirit "spirit"; in which there are no things, men, speculations about "gods"—but rather *powers*—and life is a heroic affair of every moment, made of symbols, illuminations, commands, ritual, and sacrificial actions.

In this world there is no longer a "here" or a "there," or attachment; everything is infinitely equal and infinitely diverse, and action originates from itself, pure and hidden. The "Wind," the "Breath" (the Breath of the Hermetic "Great Green") carries everything in the sense of a sacrifice, an offering, a luminous and marvelous ritual, among zones of an activity as calm as the deepest sleep, and immobility as intense as the most vehement tornado.

That which is "human" here melts away as a dark memory of misery and as the specter of a long nightmare. The Angel awakens, the Ancient Ice[61]: immobility and a vertiginously slow pace resolve every tension; this is the threshold and the transfiguration; beyond it lies—the world of the eternal.

61. The author is making an untranslatable wordplay here in the Italian, using the words *angelo* (angel) and *antico gelo* (ancient ice). (Editor's note)

Abraxas

The Second Preparation of the Hermetic Caduceus

In chapter III I told you the first secret of the Great Work: "Create an image and stare at it. In the darkness, get used to seeing with an invisible light." Then, with the practice of the mirror, I told you how you can entirely detach the sense of sight from the physical world and external space and actualize it in the ethereal light.

This is the beginning. The perfection of this starting point, which is available to the adepts,[62] consists in knowing during the day, as you are awake, how *to see and not to see at the same time*—to see in the invisible light and to not see in the visible.

Be aware, however, that our goal is not the passive ecstasy of one who only sees and perceives the manifestations, but rather the capacity to direct them and to project on them his own strength, to create them and to destroy them by provoking corresponding effects in the physical world and on the beings inhabiting it.

This is the second phase of the *Opus magicum*. The name we give it is: *the second preparation of the Hermetic Caduceus*.

Every magical realization implies an active, dry, and fixed principle that acts sympathetically on a passive, humid, and volatile principle: that is, a "projection" in the vehicle of a clothing of sulfurous fire, also known as *breath* and *burning water*. First of all one needs to prepare with the Art these two elements or principles in our hermetically sealed "philosophical vessel."

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62. This achievement requires the connection that in an ordinary person rigidly connects the subtle body to the physical body, to become *unstable* (this amounts to saying: it requires a certain *extinction of desire as a power of identification*). Then the will can intervene directly and produce with an inner act the isolation of the subtle body, thus neutralizing all the physical perceptions and seeing only with the inner sight. (Note by UR)

Let me remind you what "hermetic sealing" means: *the guard at the doors of the senses*—and: *Silence*. Initiatory silence does not consist merely in not talking *(not even with yourself)*, but also in not hearing and in not reading. Detach yourself mentally from your surroundings, by realizing that nothing can or may be allowed to disturb you: "The unrighteous will not succeed in affecting my equilibrium."

When magi claim that the "vessel" must be made of pure crystal and very strong, they are pointing out that in your consciousness, or "laboratory," in addition to constant tenacity, everything must be transparent. You need to be able to see clearly and objectively within yourself, as if under the light of the sun, and also to realize the absolute impossibility of being insincere with yourself.

The masculine active principle is still our Gold ☉, but it is exalted, freed, and fixed.

Remember the first preparation of this principle (see chapter IV). It is a soothing, unifying, and dominating of the mind; it is the calm, energetic being superior to yourself; it is the nucleus that in the intoxicating atmosphere of the "soul of the earth" knows how to resist passion by remaining steady in the impure impetus of the "waters." Eliphas Levi *(Dogma and Ritual of High Magic)* said that the magus *thinks and wills;* he does not love anything for the sake of desire, and does not reject anything out of passion. The word "passion" designates a passive state, whereas the magus is always active and victorious. A magus in love, or a jealous or lazy magus, is a contradiction in terms. The most difficult part is to attain this realization, since when the magus has created himself, the Great Work is virtually completed in its essential principle. The "Great Magical Agent," the *natural* mediator of human omnipotence, cannot be enslaved and directed by anything other than a *supernatural* principle, which is an independent will.

Kremmerz adds: create a state of perfect neutrality, of *positive indifference*, through a complete equilibrium in yourself. Become superior to both good and evil, since your *continuous* equilibrium and the power to develop all subtle forces and to use them as you please depend on your neutrality toward both.

In regard to the "second preparation" of our Gold, you can attain it in a regular way through *consecration* or *investiture,* namely through the aid of *philosophical vinegar* and *corrosive waters,* as long as you know how to

resist them. I must tell you, though, that under certain special conditions, you may perform it even through *cruelty and suffering*.

Dispassionately inflict an extreme physical pain on yourself and endure it for a number of minutes: stand up to it, and then grow stronger—until you have the *power* to silence it.

Do violence to yourself. Do not do what you like, but what costs you: *on principle*, always take the path of greatest resistance. Shift the natural pleasure for this or that object to the pleasure of "having wanted." In conformity with an ancient formula of our Tradition, according to which in order to "dissolve" a "metal" it is necessary *to make it red-hot* and then immerse it in water, excite, exasperate an instinct, an impulse, a desire, and then, abruptly, when its fulfillment is at hand, suspend it. At that point the supersensible "eye" will see flashes come out of the lower centers and run snakelike toward the higher centers of the head, which by absorbing the former's strength begins to shine with a formidable light. This virtue of theirs is powerful and dry; it is the golden virtue of absolute command and of the absolute conception in magical realizations.

Enough said about the preparation of Gold. Now I will deal with the second principle, namely with the astral force or the fluidic being itself. According to the importance of the operations, the magi act through the fluidic being of their body—or through the fluidic being of a magical chain—or through the fluidic being that is a Spirit of the elements, a cosmic Power (angels, genii). They also utilize the procedures of sexual magic. For now, pay attention to everything that concerns the operations of the first type; if you understand them, you will understand the principle of the others as well.

The magical act is one of concrete fluidification of the will, or an *immaculate, androgynous conception* in which the fluidic force operates as a feminine principle in the creative realization under the inspiring and masculine action of the solar principle. You have already been told about the sense of the fluidic body and how, in the first preparation of the Caduceus, it is *extracted* from the physical body. But just as in the second phase of the operation an exaltation of Gold is required, such that it will absorb the stronger and drier virtues of the "Iron of the Wise," likewise, for the fluidic phase, what is required is a second regimen called "*ignification of the astral light.*"

The fluidic body at the first stage is ☿ = distilled water, also called "matter in the white state" or "washed" matter. Cesare della Riviera (*Il mondo magico de gli Heroi*, Milan, 1506, p. 56) called it "most limpid *water*, lying immobile in its clean and clear vessel." It is an immaterial, bright, calm, suspended, and *still* sensation, which is extracted through the *immersion* of consciousness in that which, *sub specie interioritatis*, corresponds to the *nervous system. But now you must strive for a deeper magical linking with the physical body, pushing consciousness downward until it becomes amalgamated with the bloodstream*—this is how you will obtain the fluidic ☿ as "matter in the red state." This is the "water of life," *burning water* or sulfuric water, since it "really burns both visibly and invisibly, actively and passively." It is *magnesius magnensis* in the explanation given by the "*Great Book of Nature*" (Italian ed., "Atanor," p. 117) of "philosophical powder or projection made with human blood," and *tinctura microcosmi magistere* in the explanation given by the same book (p. 120) of "human blood employed to make a lamp of life." It is *Auri aura*, like that gentle *wind* that, according to Hermes' "Emerald Tablet," carries the "heroic stone" in its belly. It is the "virgin's milk" that nourishes the conceived solar and divine seed, which is intact, hidden, not acting, at the center of the center; through it, as the universal menstruum or solvent according to its igneous virtue, the magical or "heroic" art is actualized. (See Della Riviera, *loc. cit.*, 56–61.)

The "ignification" or *rubedo* consists in awakening in ☿—or immersing in ☿—the inner fire or sulfur ☤ *that resides in the heart*. With this operation ☿, which is the passive and feminine Mercury, the light of the Moon, and chaste nudity of Diana, is transformed into ☿, which is active and creative Mercury. As we recall that ☤ = sulfur is composed of △ and +, this Mercury carries with it not only +, namely the consecration of equilibrium and neutrality of our first Gold, but also △, that is, the ascending force, the igneous and taurine power, the energy of animation and growth that is represented, in the symbol, by the male ♈ of the higher part of ☿ replacing the lunar ☋ of ☿; this power, astrologically speaking, corresponds to ♐, namely to Sagittarius, which is the being of *projections*.

Proceding from symbolism to practice, you must take up the ritual that leads to the sense of the "subtle body" explained in my previous essay found in chapter III. For a further step, you must choose between two paths, which correspond to *solar magic* and to *Isiac magic*. In Isiac magic

the fluidic body that produces the realization, by covering, as a "vesture of power" and an "astral whirlwind," the idea or the command posited by the positive center ☉, is ignified by the wild, turbid force of a passion burning with desire: it is a *demon* who acts and turns it into a flame—of hatred, lust, or destruction. In solar or high magic, what is at work is a clean and superhuman science. With an enlightened and calm firmness, after assuming the fluidic state, you are instructed to *shift* to your heart through the ritual that others have already explained, following a ritual evocation of fire. You are also told to fix yourself there, and through visualization to ignite and grow a flame in it, into which you will be absorbed.[63]

The "transformation" that will ensue—from an inner, luminous state you shift to a state of *diffuse active heat*—is the *knowledge of* ☿. Then the composition of the second element, or the "androgynous fire," is completed.

As with ☿, let your consciousness fix this state. Then let it go, but evoke it several times more until you feel it in your power to awaken it at will. Then learn to moderate its ardor in a gentle, slow, tempered, and *continuous* way, so that the superfluous humidity of Water may naturally and imperceptibly dry up, and the flame go up and down in the Mercury that has been properly cooked. Everything depends on the "regimen of fire," according to Philalethes (*Le filet d'Ariadne*, Paris, 1695, p. 75). He adds that "without fire, the matter (= ☿) is useless and the philosophical mercury remains a chimera living only in the imagination." Kremmerz equally claims that the "initiate is not such if he does not control the power to nourish in himself a center of astral activity that can be turned on at will in his inner fluidic body."

At this point the conditions for any magical realization are virtually present. *The magical act is the conception of a lightning-flash, a swift operation in which the mental power ☉ fixes the command or the conception of the goal and unleashes against it the ignified fluidic force ☿.* This is called

63. We may note here that the character of *perversion* of Isiac magic consists in the fact that that which is the center and higher principle, ☉, here becomes an instrument for a "projection" that is commanded by the forces of the "being of desire"; instead of being the *determining factor,* as in the other type of magic, it is the *determined factor,* doing violence to its nature. It is the conjunction in which the Moon dominates the Sun, and the female dominates the male. (Note by UR)

acting." This is why the Hermetists talk about the Work as a "woman's game" or as "child's play," thus confirming the teaching of the Kabbalah, which in Arcanum XI of the Tarot uses as the symbol of Strength a woman who effortlessly closes and immobilizes the jaws of a furious lion. This is why it is improper to talk about "will" in magic, because will as conceived by men is characterized by tension, violence, rigidity, or exactly the opposite features favorable to magical realizations. One needs to feel superior, not limited by obstacles, powerful and ready in spirit, dwelling in a state of perfect *justice*. This is the necessary basis for the calm, determined placing of the image, which is accurately defined in all its parts, in the mental light that needs to be ignified and gradually exalted until you reach the state of *sympathy*. It is in this state, as a pure act of spirit, that the sudden flash of "projection" needs to occur.

The magical equilibrium of all the conditions is an instant that you must be able to grasp without delay or fear. In the operations focused on natural things, the astrological conditions, the ceremony, the weather, the time, the hour, the place, the formulas, the gestures, the perfumes, and all the other elements that need to be scrupulously observed should create an analogous connection of equilibrium and sympathy of invisible human and natural forces, which, being seized and fixed by the will, make it magically and irresistibly operative.

I do not think that until now you have been told about things of our Art in a more clear and precise way. If you know today how to understand all this in your spirit, and if this is your destiny, the winged shoes of Hermes are yours for the "marvelous adventure."

VII

Luce

Instructions for Ceremonial Magic

Preliminaries

The instructions given up to this point, provided they have been followed with the great perseverance that is required in all operations of the Sacred Science, are now sufficient to lead to the practice of evocatory Magic, without the danger of excessive physical or psychic reactions that might turn out to be harmful.

The ritual that we will explain step-by-step actually represents a path of realization that can be independent from the theurgical practices expounded so far; thus, this path may be followed by anybody who is so inclined, without referring to those practices. I must advise you, though, that it is useful to develop the two parallel systems in harmony.

As far as magical realization is concerned, it is necessary to first give some particular notions and some warnings. The ritual that I am discussing here is an absolutely preliminary one, in preparation for more difficult operations that will be introduced in due course. This ritual must be performed with the highest degree of accuracy, following the instructions, pursuing with unwavering will the perfect realization of even the smallest details, including the apparently insignificant ones.

I advise you that this ritual does not refer to a particular time of year, but can always be performed, as long as it is not interrupted, until the intended result is achieved, no matter how much or how little time it takes. The only essential variation, which will be explained in its place, is the combination of perfumes adapted to each constellation.

Let me point out from the start that, in Magic, the divisions of the year do not correspond to the divisions of the secular year, but rather are calculated astronomically and correspond to the sun's entrance into and exit from the separate constellations. Therefore, remember that our year be-

gins on March 21, in correspondence to the sun's entrance into Aries and to the beginning of spring.

However, since some months are more or less propitious, I recommend performing this ritual during the last month of fall and the three months of winter, in other words, from the last days of November all the way through the following March.

The ritual is particularly fitting for an initial operation of empowerment and illumination. The immediate objective is actualized by establishing contact with higher intelligences[73] in order to receive an illumination from them that can manifest itself in various ways: first of all, through the direct manifestation of the Being invoked, which then appears in a visible and tangible way to the practitioner, giving him specific instructions that must be followed *with intelligence*. These instructions are sometimes so complete as to be the only thing the practitioner will ever need to know. I mean this in an absolutely holistic way, in reference to every kind of individual activity (both in matters of mere knowledge and in all that concerns experiences or instructions for personal development), as well, as often happens, as what may be pertinent to the practical life contingent to every individual.

Another form of manifestation is the intelligent correspondence with the being invoked, realizable during the same invocation or, more often, when the invocator is asleep. One needs to be cautious when judging such manifestations, in order not to create illusions or fancies that could lead to dangerous deviations. On the contrary, it is better to entirely suspend any kind of judgment until one attains a state in which there can no longer be doubt as to their origin. This sense of certainty cannot be communicated, but only experienced.

When the communication occurs in this form, the greatest difficulty is to clearly remember when waking up, and afterward, whatever has been perceived or heard during the night. In other words, to transport the state of lucid consciousness during sleep into the lucid consciousness of the

73. It is necessary to remember that in the order of ceremonial magic, to which the following instructions by Luce are addressed, the practice itself causes metaphysical states of being to assume objective and personalized forms, almost as if they were separate beings (intelligences, angels, elementals, etc.). Obviously such experiences should not be considered to be definitive. (Note by UR)

waking state. This is accomplished by *fixing* the impressions received in the state that is no longer sleep, reaffirming them as one begins to wake up.

The further objective of the ritual is connected to the problem that we have all posed from the start and that we have dealt with hitherto by supplying detailed instructions aimed at finding a practical solution to the problem of the Self in its totality: in regard to its essence—*what the Self is*—and its phenomenology—i.e., *what the Self can do;* how its action is manifested; and which reactions it has in the environment surrounding it, or in the universe, in which it becomes the focal point. We will take this general line of questions regarding the Self onto another plane of development, similar to the one that we have been following up to now. This plane in fact leads to the same goal, the same fulfillment, but with an essential difference in method.

Up to now, the instructions supplied were rather limited to what concerns a *solar* development of the acting principle, which, consisting in itself, or leaning as little as possible on a few external things such as perfumes, develops its own principle and leads it to the highest degree of ignification.

What I intend through these instructions is to begin from the state of consciousness proper to the majority of people, women included; these will be instructions that have as their immediate objective the development, knowledge, integration, and finally the solution of the lunar principle, up to the point at which conversion and *transmutation* occur. This does not mean that if an already established ☉ operates on this plane, it will be a disavantage; rather, it means a greater perfection in action and a greater speed in the various stages of the operations. The fusion of the two systems is certainly to be advised, since great advantages may be derived by reacting reciprocally on each other.

The reader will remember (see the introduction to chapter I) that as a starting point we had asked the question: "What am *I*?" This problem is not solved by any theory or intellectual notion, but rather and only by an *experience:* namely by the experience of *Being* (hence God says in Exodus 3:14: *"Eièh ascèr Eièh,"* "I Am Who I Am"). The ritual will lead a person to live in a radical way this incommunicable and absolute experience, until one attains a state of direct evidence transcending everything that may come from the human mind.

In this regard we have already noticed that these instructions are explained and must be accepted from an absolutely practical point of view. One should *never* ask why, or seek an explanation or a "reason," but rather understand well, learn well, and perform well. These are the conditions: no discussions are allowed.

We teach those who yearn to be born into the life of higher worlds and to take their first steps, gain control of themselves, acquiring the sense of the new realities that are manifested to them. Those who, before their time, want to take their own initiative may do so at their own risk and peril. The risks involved are like the ones incurred by a newborn who, without any experience or guidance, is left to himself in the course of daily events.

Every form is the appearance of an intelligence. There are visible and invisible forms; known and unknown forms.

Every form is the realization of a balanced force that acts in a particular, occult way that is *coagulated* in it.

Every force is intelligence: it is spirit.

Intelligences are arranged in a hierarchy. There is an intelligence in a grain of sand, in the infinitely small, which is hierarchically below the overall intelligence, which may be an organ.

Thus, for example, among human beings there are elementary intelligent forces that preside over the organism, subject to a single one that in turn is subject to the intelligence presiding over the family; the latter, in turn, is subject to the *Numen* (protective spirit) of the city, and so on.

To fully understand all this and to begin to *feel* it is the essential condition for the magical path. The Masters of this path speak in the Name of the Supreme Hierarch, from whom every illumination comes.

Those who faithfully follow the instructions that I am laying out will certainly be able to attain sublime heights one day and receive the "royal crown."

Thus, let experience be the starting point of departure and the support of every consideration. Slow down your thoughts: *never* express your opinion about something you do not know perfectly well.

Man has the faculty to create and shape new forms, organizing them freely from "matter" or from the elements that constitute it. Or he may even act on the intelligent forces that always dominate this matter.

However, the secret, ultimate, and highest meaning is in the power that, through the mystery of the "virgin," provides the origin and justification for every creative act.

Know that the *word* is a living reality that you create, and to which you supply a body and a life: it is a being that becomes emancipated from you and acts on its own. According to us, the word is not just a sound that comes out of the lips, but also gesture, thought, and all that is expressed by a being that is not immobile, closed, cold, or isolated. This too is a mystery, and yet it should be enough to understand what is your constant responsibility.

In Magic your thought, your intelligence, and your will are mere instruments of your strength and of your power that transcends them.

You must learn to know in an experimental way, according to the natural order of the proper reactions, what is their constitution and how, by means of their exercise, their use, and a constant, tenacious, uninterrupted training, through symbol and ritual action, they help to strengthen the principle from which they emanate, up to a limit that transcends every imagination and semblance of possibility.

You have been given the tools and the proper instrument. These are your principles and your methods: operate in this fashion.

As you operate according to the precepts, know the direct result of the operation; by studying this result on the basis of the law of equilibrium of the opposites, you will know, from the effect, what has determined it.

But this will be given you more fully at a later time.

It is important that you clearly understand the classical concept of the triple world, which we call:

— physical world
— spiritual world
— divine world

The physical world is the world of form, the contingent world in which the universal forces are realized in a denser way. It is the world of impure matter and impure beings, inhabited by inferior elementals, ghosts, etc.

The spiritual world has been designated by some people with the term "mental." It is the reign of spirits who dominate and organize "matter." Among them there are also the real elementals and the Intelligences.

The divine world is inhabited by the Gods, who are the origin and the determining element of other subordinated worlds. They are free power and will, which is realized perfectly in immediate actualization.

You will know the physical world by observing its organization and phenomena and by studying the external laws that sustain them. You will also come to know it in a better and more perfect way, by penetrating the spiritual world and correlating the two according to the law of harmonious relationships.

You will learn the secrets of the spiritual world when you overcome the barriers represented by the body, by dominating it, overcoming it, sometimes by excluding it, putting your intelligence in relation to the intelligences that preside over that world.

You will penetrate the mysteries of the divine world provided you become worthy of a divine spirit to manifest itself directly to you and enlighten you, or by "knowing" the Gods yourself, as long as you can elevate yourself to their level, acquiring their power for yourself.

Remember that in the three worlds, the law of analogy reigns supreme, which is also the law of equilibrium. Know that the mystery of one world can reveal the mystery of another, as long as you understand and realize the relationships of "sublimation" or of "condensation" in a manner adequate to your purpose.

Remember, though, that this triple division, which I have just explained, does not have a merely hierarchical value. In order to intuit what is the complex system of the hierarchy of beings, just look at the hierarchies of human society and of natural beings, and draw an analogy with the invisible world.

I have mentioned the existence of an absolute law, namely the law of equilibrium. I would like to emphasize that it rules not only in the operations of the Art, but in life as well, since it is in life that equilibrium achieves its perfect and unique realization.

Equilibrium is life and is in life, in every act, in every essence, in every power, in every possibility, and in every reality.

You have surely heard and read about this law before. But maybe you have not asked the question that needs to be asked, in order to be able, if not to know, to at least intuit what it represents in our practice. Through

this law we determine if the agent or the reaction, or both, is active; in the latter case, we determine the new element on which they act.[74]

Those who know the numerical symbolism may attempt to solve this by meditating on this strange recipe "to fix Mercury," which we transcribe from an ancient manuscript. "Of different things, take: 2-3 and 3-1; 1 and 3 make 4; 3,2 is 10; between 3 and 4 there is a 1; 3 from 4 is 1; 1 from 3 is 2. Between 2 and 3 there is 10 1,1,1 and 1,2,2, and 1,1, and 1 to 2. So 1-1, I have told you everything."

Coming back to the practical magical realization, I am warning you that the result of this operation may be attained both through "reflection" (more will be said about it when dealing with "magical chains") and through "plastic coagulation" in the astral "matrix." This matrix is organized in such a way as to generate different forms, which, in turn, by separating from it, perpetuate themselves in the form of life that has been assigned to them, which has a double essence: one active, creative, and actual; the other passive, generating, and plastic.

Moreover, remember that in the operation it is necessary to determine exactly the purpose that one is attempting to achieve. This act already has the power to establish a determining and efficient relationship between the operator and the act that he has carried out by performing the ritual.

It is also necessary for you to have a certain knowledge (acquired both through experience and a well-established concept in you), of the *X* you want to contact or on which you want to act in order to achieve your goal. Finally: act appropriately, according to the forms ritually prescribed.

Practice will gradually teach you what degree of intensity, concentration, or "projection" is appropriate for each goal.

Always be aware that for every action there is a corresponding reaction of like intensity that reestablishes the equilibrium, which is not stagnancy, but rather a gradual shift on infinite planes of forces.

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74. We may note the very close analogy that exists between what in Magic and in the order of active interiority is the "law of equilibrium" and that which in modern physics is that law of "symmetry" which in the order of phenomenal considerations has replaced the principle of causality and sufficient reason. The "sufficient reason" of a phenomenon is reduced today to an "a-symmetry"— just like, in the other field, the intervention of a being or an influence in an operation is the alteration or transformation of the equilibrium or inner neutrality in the course of the same operation. (Note by UR)

Understand this, and know how to realize it with wise prudence and gradually, all the way to the top. Be aware that a mistake on your part can bring about the worst consequences for you or others.

The Ritual

[Time] — This ritual, in preparation for greater operations aimed at attaining enlightenment, may be performed during any time of the year, and it must be carried out until its realization is sufficient and adequate for further rituals.

It is however opportune, as I have already said, to perform the ritual during winter and in the last month of the preceding fall, namely from the last days of November to the following March 20. During the periods of waxing moon it should be performed completely; during waning moon it will suffice to keep the lamp burning and to burn the perfumes, as will be shown. As far as women are concerned, during their menstrual period and the three days preceding it and following it, they are not to perform the ritual or enter the room. They will recite the purification prayer in the morning and in the evening, following the ablutions.

[Food] — You may only eat vegetables, milk, and derivative products. Refrain from alcohol or similar stimulating substances. You are only allowed a little tea or coffee. Maintain absolute chastity of body and mind.

If it is possible, keep food to a minimum, even suppressing your appetite or replacing it with astral nourishment, from which, as I have said elsewhere, you will greatly benefit.

It is good to drink plenty of water.

[Allocation of time] — Get up early in the morning, before sunrise, and immerse yourself in flowing water; then dress in the proper clothes and perform the ritual. Having done that, go about your business until sunset, when, after performing the ablution again, you will again perform the ritual before going to bed. It is important to move the time of breakfast between 10 and 11 A.M., and dinner between 4 and 5 P.M.

[Clothing] — Wear a loose, completely white garment of pure linen; also wear a linen belt around your waist. Your shoes should be of the same material.

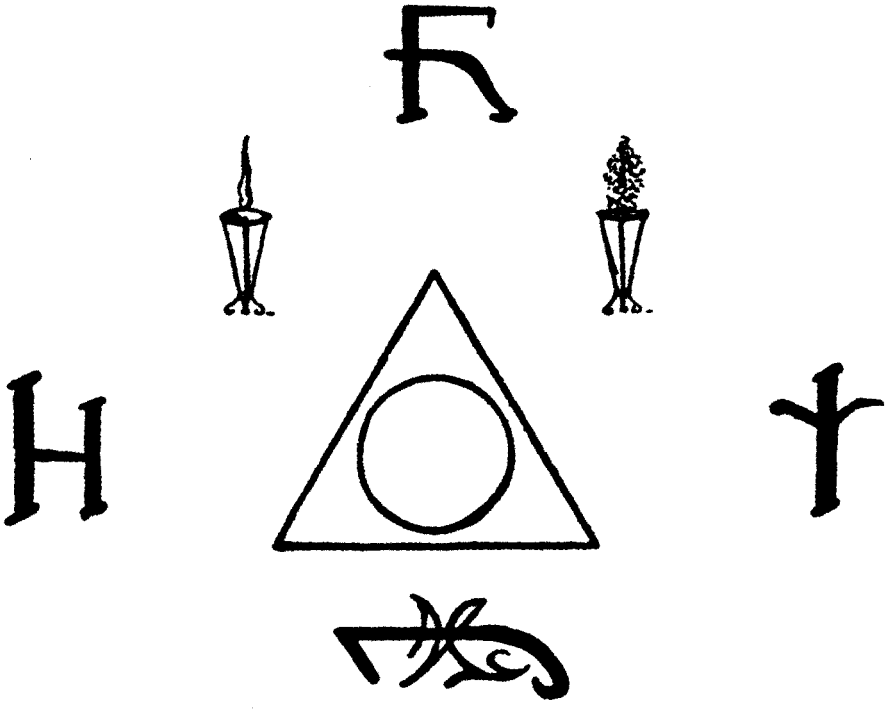
When dressing, after the ablution, recite the proper oration, which I will teach you later.

[The room] — Obtain a large room, underground if possible, which you will retain exclusively for the performance of rituals. The walls should to be white, red, violet, or light blue. The floor needs to be cleaned with flowing water. The room should be square, or round; it should not have its door on its eastern side. Moreover, you should be aware of the locations of the four cardinal points.

[The brazier and the lamp] — Obtain a tripod, about one meter high, in which you will light a fire with pine and laurel wood; then burn the right perfumes in accordance to the laws of days and constellations given elsewhere. You also need another tripod, which will be closed at the top, with a hole in which you insert a wick. Inside it put some virgin olive oil.

The lamp must burn uninterrupted for the entire period of the operations.

[The operation] — After performing the ablution and putting on the linen garments, enter the room, light the fire and the lamp, and burn some perfumes.



Then draw in the center with gold[75] an equilateral triangle, with the vertex pointing to the East; then inscribe in it a circle. Draw toward the east, west, north, and south (in this order) the signs indicated in the table. Place the tripod eastward, on the right, and the burning lamp on the left.

Position yourself in the middle of the circle, facing eastward, and burn more perfume; concentrate on the spirit and recite with clear voice the invocation of the solar Archangel that you will find in the Peter of Abano's *Magical Elements*.[76]

I will give you more instructions later. In the meantime, those who want have enough with which to begin.

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75. The signs can be traced with either the tip of a sword that has been magically consecrated; or with "magnetized" water, charcoal, or oil; or just with the index finger of the right hand with "gold," namely with the mind fixed on the solar principle so that they may be imparted a "direction of efficacy." In regard to the effective golden tint, see its recipe and ritual of composition in the *Enchyridion of Leo III* (ed. A. Fidi, Milan, 1924, pp. 95–97). (Note by UR)

76. I swear and confirm over you the strong and holy Angels of God in the name of Adonai, Eye, Eye, Eya who is who was, is and will be, Eye, Abraye; in the name of Sadday, Cados, Cados, Cados, who sits on high above the Cherubim, and in the name of the same mighty God who is powerful and exalted over all the Heavens, Eye, Seraye, who shaped the centuries after creating on the first day the world, the heavens, the earth, the sea and all the things that are in them, and sealed them with his holy name Phaa; through the names of the holy Angels, who rule in the fourth host and serve in the presence of the most powerful Salamia, a Great and honored Angel; and through the name of the star which is the *Sun* and through his sign, and through the immense name of the living God and through all the names, I summon you, *Michael*, O Great Angel, who are in charge of the day of the Lord; and through the name of Adonai, the God of Israel, who created the World and what is in it, that you may work for and fulfill every petition of mine, according to any will and wish, to any benefit and cause.

Ea

The Doctrine of the "Immortal Body"

The initiatic teaching concerning immortality is not without relation to the doctrine of the *triple body,* which I will now briefly discuss.

First of all, the term "body" is taken analogically, to designate the "seats" that consciousness may assume, according to a possibility which, however, transcends that of the overwhelming majority of human beings. Hence such a doctrine, like all esoteric doctrines, is true only in an initiatic context. To speak of it in relation to ordinary man has no sense at all; for him there are no three, or seven, or nine "bodies," or however many are fancied by Theosophy, but simply the human state of consciousness, conditioned by its relation with the physical organism that everyone knows.

This organism can be seen, felt, described, and sensed by common man, but in reality he does not *know* anything about it (in our sense of "knowing"). Just as he does not understand the power due to which an arm can be moved at will (he may become aware of it in the event of a semiparalysis or a nervous illness), likewise he does not understand the power through which the heart beats. Thus, to common man, the body remains for the most part an unknown, enigmatic entity into which he mysteriously awakens and to which he finds himself connected.

Conversely, those who should find the way to shine a light in this deep and mysterious zone would develop a "knowledge" of the various bodies discussed by esoterism. These bodies, I wish to say from the start, are not *other* bodies, but rather other *ways* to live than which is commonly understood as a body. They are so many phases of the Great Work.

We have shown (chapter V) that real survival after death depends on a consciousness that has isolated itself and endured without the support and the condition of the psychophysical organism. Those who have been able to do so are virtually "beyond the waters"; the failing of consciousness, there-

fore, is a fact of little consequence to them. I have also mentioned the possibility of aiming at pure liberation. The way leading to it lies in becoming free from all real and possible determinations, from conquest to conquest, from nudity to nudity, until the garment falls away through an absolute integration into "selfhood." Then the formula *"ego sum"* (I am) is overcome, as the *"sum"* (am) becomes resolved into *"est"* (is). This is the point of the "Supreme Identity," the Buddhist nirvana, and Plotinus's "One." In Hatha Yoga it is said: "Empty as a vase in the air—full as a vase in the ocean."

Aside from this, there is the *magical* possibility of those who, having realized detachment, reestablish contact with the manifested world, intending to entirely assume and master, in all of the elements and processes, the form that acted as a basis of their human life. The action here shifts to that which could be called the "corpse"—hence in Chinese tradition the expression "the solution of the corpse" designating the Work. However, in virtue of the essential relations connecting macrocosm and microcosm, such an action works on the hierarchies that command the various elements of nature in general.

As a starting point, we need to emphasize that the *individuality* of the overwhelming majority of people is a fiction, their very unity being a fictitious and precarious unity of a mere aggregate of forces and influences that in no way can be said to belong to them. Abraxas (chapter I) has already pointed this out.

The forces on which man depends are first of all of a psychic order, and second of an organic order. To the first is connected everything that is related to passions, feelings, beliefs, natural affections, traditions, blood ties, and so on. Ordinary man should never say, "I love," but, "Love loves through me." As the fire manifests itself in individual flames when the necessary conditions are present, likewise love (or better said, the *being* of love) manifests itself in individual beings who love with a love that transcends and transports them, in relation to which they are more or less passive. The same applies to hatred, fear, piety, etc. Nor is that all: every nation, every religion or traditional institution has its own "being"; the instinctive and deep reaction against an insult to one's country, faith, or customs is the reaction of such beings and not, as it is commonly assumed, an *individual* reaction, proper to a distinct and autonomous Self.

Much less so is one truly a real individual as we descend into the depths

of the organic being: circulatory, endocrine, and nervous systems, sleep, hunger, and so on. All this, in individuals, represents a transcendent and collective element, of which it is obvious that others, rather than the single Self, are the active and leading principle. The Self leans on all this, and neither *is* it nor dominates it. Thus its individual life is a mirage that endures until the dissolution of the contingent nexus of equilibrium that gives a relative stability and unity to its psychophysical being, and until the various aggregated forces are reabsorbed into their respective "beings." These beings are not to be found just anywhere: they exist in thoughts, actions, passions, creations, bodily functions, and organs of human beings. They invisibly permeate and direct most of what is called ordinary life.

This is why he who really wants to live must first *die,* separating himself from this mêlée of influences and dependencies, and making his own the principle of a life that is of itself, and, thus, immortal. The "initiatic death" establishes man in the first element of this new life against which death will be powerless. But if immortality is to be more than the mere extension of consciousness, and if this consciousness is to be articulated in forms of action and expression proper to both planes, then it is necessary for that free and supernatural element to communicate its quality to various principles and forces present in the human aggregate. This is the essence of the theory of the *magical body* or *resurrection body*. What needs to be done is to re-create one's body, to retrace its obscure and mystical process in virtue of which it organized itself (or better, was organized) and then lent to a Self; it needs to be retraced from the perspective of the principle that defeated death and that is of itself. The following phases of this process consist in the contact established with various beings, psychic at first, and then cosmic (gods), who rule over human beings and who act in their bodies and in their minds. The initiate, in this order of operations, must reaffirm his autonomy from them, even subjecting himself to those forces that used to be present in his organism. The Gnostics' "vesture of glory" or "immortal body," replacing the "form of slavery," is the final consecration of those who victoriously pass this series of tests, thus becoming wholly emancipated from the spheres of "fate" and from the dominion of the various "Rulers" or "Archons."

The immortal body is first of all a *simple* body, not composite, since the principle that pervades and entirely dominates it is simple; this principle

replaces the multitude, often antagonistic, of influences and powers that dominated the human soul and body.

One might say that it is *made of consciousness and power, no longer of matter.* In fact, it is typical of traditional teaching to consider matter not as a distinct principle, coexisting with the spirit, but as a form or state, according to which the *only* reality, namely the spirit, experiences itself. It is simply that which is inert, passive, and unconscious in the spirit; as such, it may always be "resolved" or "reduced," and this is precisely the case of the "magical body." As an analogy, think of what happens in the so-called "ideomotoric reflexes": if one assumes a state of complete relaxation and creates a vivid and fixed image of one's arm rising up, one will in fact end up with a raised arm, in virtue of a direct power produced by that image, without making any conscious effort. *Now imagine something similar for the whole body:* namely, that the entire body, in the intimacy of its fibers, in all of its organs, functions, and movements, is assumed in the mind through an absolute and radiant image. Then the body would no longer exist as body; as its substance and basis it would only have this magical image: it would be a body directed, moved, and vivified by the mind. Its organs would be resolved in symbols or shaping ideas, which are the astral "signatures" or "names" of the beings to which they correspond. Hence, the name of *manomâyâkâya* (body made of mind) given in the East to the "immortal body," also called *mâyâvî-rûpa,* or "apparent form."

The reason for this expression is clear. At this point it is the body that leans on the Self, rather than the other way around. If the Self should fail even for an instant, the body would collapse into nothingness. The Self has now taken the body upon itself, sustaining and commanding it, in the power of its own mind, just as ordinary consciousness does with an ordinary thought. *To withdraw its image, to stop thinking it, would amount to make it disappear, without leaving behind a corpse* (this operation was known in Taoism under the name of *s'i-kiai,* "the solution of the corpse").

In this chapter we talk about the symbol of "salt," which, in Hermeticism, usually designates the body or the physical element. The salt is the *fixed,* or the "necessary," element, the quality of that which *resists* "Fire" and cannot be changed. Prison of the sleeping Sulfur, its "awakening" produces a virtue that reacts on it, turning it into a *volatile*—in other words, into a way of being characterized by *freedom* and *by transformation of air.*

Likewise, the Gnostics' "vesture of glory" was identified with the *"body of freedom"* (a term borrowed by St. Paul); its equivalent in Mahayana Buddhism is *nirmânakâya,* an expression that can be translated as "body of transformation." In other words, the regenerated body, more than a body, is a power; or better, it is the body in the *state of power.* It coincides with the free possibility of manifesting itself in a body, but not necessarily in this one exclusively, nor only on the earthly plane. The faculty of word is *mine,* insofar as I can shape it and manifest it as I please, or even suspend it in silence. The initiate who has devoted himself to these applications finds himself in an identical relationship with his own body: he does with it as he pleases. He can project it in one form or in another, make it appear or disappear, without himself undergoing any transformation. This is why in the Hellenistic mysteries we find the expression *seminarium* (from the Latin *semen* = seed) designating the magical body: this is not a particular and *fixed* body, but rather the active possibility, the *seed* for infinite bodies susceptible in theory to be shaped and "projected" by the mental substance through a congruous transformation.

This should not make us think that the magical body is *unreal* because it is *apparent (mâyâvî-rûpa).* Everything that is said about it does not refer to the visible physical qualities of such a body, which, in this regard, could also be identical, in a particular apparition, to some human and mortal body. It refers only to the function, transformed from passive into active, from necessary to free, according to which all these qualities are now subordinated to the central power. The fact that a thing falls under my power does not make it unreal, but rather supremely real. A body in which there is no longer "matter" and which is therefore "apparent" or "mental" simply signifies a body in which there is nothing left that *resists* the spirit, and which is simply given to the spirit: thus a perfect act. The transformation is not material but *substantial*—in the sense in which this term is used in Catholic theology when, in reference to the Eucharist, the identity and preservation of sensible attributes are retained in the Host, which nevertheless undergoes an essential transformation. It is a *transubstantiation* that occurs.[77]

77. Alchemical Hermeticism knew the saying: *"Transmutemini de lapidibus mortuis in vivos lapides philosophicos"* (Transform yourselves from dead stones into living philosophical stones). The "stone" was a recurrent symbol for the human body. In *Theatrum Chemicum* (1602, I, p. 267), the alchemist Peter Bonus wrote: "The ancient alchemists

The magical body is invulnerable and immortal; only what is composed and dependent is liable to alteration and corruption.[78] This body can properly be called *vajra,* namely "diamond-thunderbolt," something almost adamantine, incorruptible, made of power and fulminating light. In neo-Platonism, the "igneous body" or "radiant body" of the immortals has the same meaning and is connected to an analogous doctrine.

Finally, *to think* of a place and, at the same time, to *be* in real, effective presence in that place and in that time,[79] is not a miraculous virtue, but rather a natural one for a body that is absorbed by the mind (or for what of it has been absorbed by the mind) and sustained only by its own image. It is where the mind is.

In regard to details, the "immortal body" has also been called "triple body." He who is endowed with it is called "Lord of the Three Worlds." The starting point, technically speaking, is the state of "nakedness" that is realized through the initiatic death and transferred from extra-bodily states to the earthly state of the initiate.

The first operation consists in shifting to a direct relationship with that of which the world of thoughts, representations, and emotions constitutes a simple, attenuated, particular reflection. For this purpose it is necessary to proceed to the "extraction of Mercury." This process is first of all the realization of the "subtle" or "fluidic" state that acts as a mediator between the two worlds: that of sensible exteriority and that of *solar* immanence. Through this state it is possible to establish contact with the deep forces

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knew through their art about the approaching end of the world and the resurrection of the dead. For the soul [through the Hermetic work] is connected again, for all eternity, to its original body. The body becomes totally glorified and incorruptible, incredibly subtle, penetrating every density. Its nature will be both spiritual and bodily. Ancient (Hermetic) philosophers *have seen the Last Judgment in this Art,* namely in the germination and in the birth of their stone. In it occurs the reunion of the soul ready to be glorified with its original body, in an 'eternal glory.'" (*Margarita pretiosa* in Manget, II, p. 20ff.)

78. Hippocrates said: "If man were *one* he would never be sick," and "It is not possible to find the cause of sickness in that which is *one.*" De Maistre, after quoting these lines, rightly adds: "Such a luminous saying applies as well to the moral domain." (*Sur les sacrifices,* 1924, II, p. 288)

79. To make this possibility comprehensible in all its scope, it is necessary to go beyond the linear and realistic view of time. More on this will be said in the next chapter in regard to the phenomenon of precognition. (Note by UR)

that are chained within the human organism, and eventually in the blood system, in the glandular system, and in the reproductive system, which have this double correspondence: 1) animal kingdom, plant kingdom, and mineral kingdom; 2) dreaming state, sleeping state, state of apparent death (see chapter V). In order to clarify this correspondence, I will say that the symbols or "names" that awaken by transforming into superconsciousness what for ordinary people is the dreaming state reveal the "types" of various animal species, namely the beings that dominate the various animal species, of which the single individuals are like "corpuscles" of their "bodies." Such are the so-called *sacred* or *living animals* (usually made to correspond to the twelve signs of the zodiac), which the initiate "marries," in other words, "possesses," sealing his own body with this "marriage." The same can be said for the other two stages, in the last of which appears the creative original force, or dragon (which the *Sepher Yetsirah* places "at the center of the universe, like a King on his throne"), Sacred Fire, "Ur," or *kundalini*. Moving through the various "centers," it actualizes the septenary hierarchy (seven planets, seven angels, etc.) and this means to extend the "magical resurrection of the flesh" to the transcendental plane, thus making it absolute.

Then it begins by reassuming the world of forms and finite beings subject to generation and corruption, namely the *caused* or *generated* world; correspondingly, to employ Mahayana terminology, it causes to shine the *nirmânakâya*, the magical or apparent body capable of transformation and appropriate action. Second, it reassumes the intermediate world of "elementating elements," of that which has form and that which does not, of the "spiritual sound"; correspondingly, it is the essence made of fullness, of free enjoyment, of radiance of the *sambhogakâya*, an invisible, purely intellectual "body." Third, it reassumes the world of illumination and "emptiness" that simultaneously is and is not, that is uncontaminated, transcendent; correspondingly, it actualizes the *dharmakâya*, or supreme "body" made of law, which is associated with the *Vajra-dhâra*, the inconceivable "Lord of the Scepter," also known as *svabhâvakâya*, namely the pure mode of what is in itself.[80]

But this body, which is one and triple, is the same "immortal body" of the "Lord of the Three Worlds."

80. On the Mahayana doctrine of the *tirkâya* or "triple body," cf. L. de la Vallée Poussin, "Studies in Buddhist Dogma," in *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, 1906, pp. 943ff.; P. Masson-Oursel, "Les trois corps du Bouddha," *Journal Asiatique*, May 1913; G. R. S. Mead, in *Theosophical Review*, vol. 39, pp. 289ff., and in *The Quest*, 1909, vol. I.

De Pharmaco Catholico
(On the Universal Medicine)

Consule te ipsum, noscas temet, et ambula ab intra.
(Take your own counsel that you may know yourself, and walk within.)

It is not without some hesitations that we introduce the readers to an original text of alchemical Hermeticism. The readers already know that the "alchemy" discussed here is not at all the infant and superstitious early chemistry, but rather the coded exposition of an initiatic teaching. In Master Giovanni Braccesco's Espositione di Geber philosopho *(Venice, 1551, f. 77 b), we are warned: "Do not be deceived and do not believe literally the Philosophers of this science, for where they have spoken most openly, there they have spoken most obscurely, namely through enigmas or similitudes." Thus our readers must remember that, generally speaking, every substance (salt, sulfur, niter, etc.) mentioned here is also a symbol of states of consciousness and of fluidic forces, and that the relative operations indicate first of all the transformations that must be performed through initiatic realization.*

The whole problem lies in interpreting the symbolism; this is difficult both because it permeates alchemy and because it is very complex and varied, as well as requiring a truly subtle power of intuition. In the footnotes we will clarify the more important points. However the readers should refer to the previous essays by Abraxas, Luce, and P. Negri, and also read the text many times with patience and intelligence. Julius Evola's The Hermetic Tradition *may also be helpful, since in that work the hermetic-alchemical symbolism is systematically explained.*

What we are publishing here is not the unabridged version of De pharmaco catholico, *but rather a synthesis made by its own anonymous author. This synthesis occupies pages 62–73 of the original edition found in the* Chymica Vannus, *which was published in Amsterdam in 1666.*

The following is the first direct translation from Latin, done by a friend of ours who has assumed the pseudonym Tikaipôs.

Know first of all that everything was formed and made from three essences, similarly and analogously in the body through astral impression and elementary operation. The elements are found in the metals—not the metals in the elements—insofar as the seed of the metals is not found so far off as many know-it-alls have fancied.[81] Even though the elements, in the formation of any body, must cooperate together, they are still not the philosophical Prime Matter, or that Astral Seed. However, they are cause of generation and of corruption, and the corruption of one thing is the generation of another.

According to the ancient philosophers, all things have been created by hatred and by love, by attraction and by repulsion *(id est ex sympathia et antipathia),* as by two qualities that are mutually contrasted in the Elements, when performing this operation, through a heavenly influx or through a specific astral impression, etc. In every mineral or metal are incorporated the Elements, from which it derives its specific characteristics. The opposite qualities through which every existing thing is conceived and born, are two and only two: Fire is the hot-dry element and Water is the cold-humid element opposed to it. Air is hot-humid and its opposite element is the dry-cold Earth.[82] Since there is no other body to be

81. The "metal" symbolizes that which in the mass of the "earth" is more individualized. In a wide sense, it indicates the human individual: more specifically, having identified the earth with the substance of the human body, the metal corresponds to various organs and plexuses found in the human body. The seed or sulfur of the metals is therefore the deep, original power of organization and individuation, namely the same power that gives form and life. This power should not be imagined to be far away in the "heavens," but it is immanent and can be individuated and dominated through the Art, thus becoming the *"magical philosophical fire."* Metals, as Philalethes says (*Filet d'Ariadne,* Paris, 1695, p. 27), which are *dead* from the time they are taken from the mine [or earth: this separation represents the differentiation of living consciousness in various individuals], are *revived* in their seed and thus are led to a *resurrection:* this is the *Universal Medicine.* According to Sendivogius (*De sulfuro,* Venice, 1644, p. 190): "In order to do the Philosophers' work, it is necessary to extract the metallic soul. Having done that, it needs to be purified and returned to its body, so that a real resurrection of the glorified body may occur."

82. It goes without saying that these elements are not the physical ones, but rather forces that are known only as states of consciousness: not the "dead" and "vulgar" elements, as the alchemists say, but the *living* ones. Knowledge of things in function of them is magical knowledge, or the sacred physics as opposed to the phenomenal and profane physics.

found outside these four Elements—and since they are incorporated in all things—this is the source of contrasts in any element. For these reasons, everything under the sphere of the moon is perishable and subject to decay. When within a single subject two contraries coexist, an incessant struggle ensues, until one of the two parts is strengthened by its external element.[83] Then the opposite force must withdraw, giving victory to the stronger one. What ensues is a certain decomposition or breaking apart of the entire compound, until a new form appears, generated through dissolution.

The elements that constitute the metals are their *three* primordial matrices: Mercury, Sulfur and Salt, which are like opposites in constant tension and struggle. Mercury, as an aerial spirit, is hostile to Salt, representing the Earth. The warm Sulfur, as Fire, is the enemy of Water, and thus it too is hostile to Mercury's humidity. Mercury, in virtue of being the water of metals, represents two elements: Air and Water. These *three* matrices are nourished by our visible and tangible material constituents; they struggle in their mortal sojourn until the predetermined time when one of the constituting metals, having become too strong for the other, suppresses it, as nothing else comes to its aid.[84] And just like a man becomes gravely sick when one element predominates in him—in the case of sulfur, he first

83. The "external element" is the corresponding cosmic element of the force that is present in an individuated manner in a particular body or being.

84. The salt-earth ⊖ corresponds to the body, which, in its inertia and material fixity, is a product of the interference and mutual neutralizing of the two fundamental opposing forces: the lunar mercury ☿ that represents the "astral light," the soul of things, the current of "waters" as a fluidic force (and thus water-air); against which sulfur ☥ is the active principle of the individual being, which, like its own body, has *fixed* and organized a certain quantity of cosmic energy. These two forces are *precipitated* in the body. To extract them from it, to evoke them; then to *dissolve* the body in them and finally reassemble it by rearranging the two forces *magically vivified,* having led the two forces from a state of antithesis to a higher state of unity through the subtle hermetic power—this is how we could summarize the task of the Art. Then the body ceases to be matter and unconscious and becomes, as *"philosopher's stone,"* the active and incorruptible form of the Self itself, a *body of resurrection.*

The technical formula is : SOLVE ET COAGULA. Potier (*Philosophia pura,* Frankfurt, 1619, p. 64) says: "To dissolve is to convert the body of our Magnet into pure spirit. To coagulate is to turn this spirit into matter again, according to the precept of that philosopher who says: 'Turn the body into spirit and the spirit into body. He who understands these things has all things; he who does not, has nothing.'"

loses fat, then flesh and even blood, and if we can not fix the principal element and reestablish in him some opportune harmony, he will die (thus the doctor has to know what element is active and what element is deficient)—likewise, and not otherwise as happens in the microcosm, so it happens in minerals and metals. The latter, through the strengthening of this or that element, suppress or oppress the contrary element, until decomposition and scission occur.

Those who know how to and can indeed gather the metallic sulfur (as their soul or igneous character) through that *magical* philosophical Fire have indeed attained the glory of this world. This igneous character is *twofold:* be aware that just as the two constituents have two enemies that are the cause of their whole dissolution, likewise the Wise have two constituents, or, rather, two receptacles of constituents *(receptacula elementorum)* through which they augment and reinforce one constituent or suppress its contrary.

You have heard how the Philosophers—in the resolution of all metals—make use of contrary elements that I call the two fires: the sympathetic and hot hermaphroditic fire, and the cold metallic fire. The igneous element, or the soul of metals, is their Sulfur: the cold fire is that Mercury which is called the water of metals, and which is reduced through Salt.[85]

Remember also that all things must be dissolved through that from which they came and to which they will return: namely Mercury, Sulfur, and Salt. The metals' Sulfur has its own Sulfur with which it needs to be strengthened and inflamed, so that it may retain dominion: this cannot be done before the Water gives in to Fire, namely the watery Mercury to its fiery Sulfur.[86]

Vulgar Sulfur and vulgar Niter are both efficacious fires, but mortal

85. Readers should refer to the essay by Abraxas in chapter VI. The "hermaphroditic fire" is ☿; the "cold fire" and the "water" in the body, the simple fluid state ☿.

86. It is the "ignification of the astral light" applied to the qualification of this light in the body's organs and in the body in general. This ignification is attained by putting the ☿ of these organs in communication with the Sulfur ☥; it is the first awakening of the *force* in the body, or of the body as force. Philalethes (*Introitus,* ch. XI) says more clearly in this regard: "Passive Sulfur which is in "Mercury" should have been active and acting. From this we can see that it is necessary to introduce from elsewhere a principle of life, as long as it is of the same nature, awakening the life that is hidden and deathlike at its center. This active Sulfur is hidden in the innermost place in the house of Aries." Aries obviously corresponds to the virile power of generation. In general, Sulfur is imagined

enemies to each other. If you will know how to reconcile them (and through their igneous spirit, to light up the metallic Sulfur), nobody, besides God, will be able to stand in your way to attain health and wealth.[87]

Moreover, we can—through the multiplication of Salt—decompose metals through mineral or tartaric salt; however, this does not help to obtain that metallic sulfur that is the soul of all metals. Thus one first needs, paying uttermost care, to grasp it through something similar to it: namely through that flaming Fire obtained from those two opposites called Sulfur and Niter, which are often called by the same name.

In order for you to know the other Fire as well—the frigid metallic one—be aware that it is nothing other than Saturn's Mercury, which can be combined with the metals, and calcinated on the fire, through the igneous and *double* element mentioned before.

Thus, you have received from me a transparent teaching that is very clear in all regards: namely, that the metals—due to a certain astral sidereal representation *(sideream imaginationem)* and to an action of Elements *(elementaremque operationem)*—are all generated by Sulfur and Mercury; that through Elements the metals must be fed and live, and finally die—

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to be enclosed in an *infernal* prison, to which Mercury possesses the keys (Sendivogius, p. 196). Cosmic vision, immortality, and prophetic knowledge are the gifts that Sulfur bestows on those who know how to find it and *free* it. (See Maximus, "Brevi note sul Cosmopolita" in issues 4–5 of *Ignis,* 1925.)

87. Niter ☉ is the dynamic, positive, masculine, and vehement polarization of the individual force, the opposite of which is the Salt's ⊖ stasis, inertia, and passivity. However, since in the text Niter appears as the opposite of vulgar Sulfur, in the latter we must recognize the more external, passional, and selfish form of individuality, to which Niter ☉ is opposed as a truly virile power. In this sense it is also called *infernal salt,* in which "infernal," besides alluding to purifying destructions (the connection of the idea of purification with niter is also found in the Bible, in Jeremiah 2:22), also has the real meaning of "infernal," due to the fact that the masculine force reflects the original creative or taurine force (♈, whose correspondence is the vertical of ☉), located in the *inferior* centers of the human organism. What matters is to reconcile and to temper vulgar Sulfur and Niter. This is the overcoming of the tenacious animal Self, without the sense of individuality carried by it being simply destroyed by the opposite impetus. On the contrary, it joins with the latter in equilibrium and in a superior domain that will allow one to activate the *metallic Sulfur,* namely to evoke and awaken the deeper energy, thus succeeding in amalgamating it with the actual body or salt, according to the symbol of *verdigris* ⊕(= salt ⊖ + niter ☉), as Oswald Wirth interprets it.

that is, to be reduced to their primitive being; that metals cannot be without Elements; and that, analogously, the Philosophers only venerate two, each one having its own enemy. Fire and Water, or Sulfur and Mercury, are these two elements; and all things were formed by them, through the medium of Salt. Everything therefore needs to be decomposed through Sulfur and Mercury and reduced to Sulfur, etc. These are those *magical* elements that decompose everything and reveal a new product. This is the *first* dry solution, which I have dealt with at length in the beginning.

The second, the humid solution, is performed with Saturn's Mercury,[88] which I have called cosmic soul *(animam mundi);* since Saturn is the first planet in Heaven and is called father of all planets, likewise the earthly Saturn is the first, and from it all metals originate. Therefore it can be found in all of them, and not without reason I have called its spirit *"cosmic spirit."*

However, before going on at length about this solution, I must inform you earnestly once more that the Philosophers have not only two magical elements—two Mercuries and two Saturns—but also two metals. In regard to these two Mercuries I have promised to instruct you without complication or distraction on how to conduct yourself in such circumstances. Know therefore that when the philosophers talk about their Mercury, you should not think about ordinary Mercury, since theirs is a metallic Mercury and hot-dry rather than cold-humid, while ordinary Mercury is hot in all its being, and thus cannot be mistaken for philosophical Mercury.[89]

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88. Since Saturn is the oldest planet, the Mercury of Saturn may be related to a primordial state and—since it is identified in the text as "soul of the world"—devoid of any individuation of the life-force. In the humid "solution," which according to the text, as opposed to the *dry* solution operated by the double or androgynous Fire (Sulfur + Niter =☿), is obtained with Saturn's Mercury, we may see a hermetic variation of the "humid" or dissolutive way in general, which opens the way to the water of the "Great Sea."

89. The opposition between the two Mercuries and the two Saturns (the vulgar and the philosophical) may be reduced to the opposition existing between the qualification of fire as vulgar Sulfur and as Niter. The element is assumed at first in its properly human form (psychological-animic), and at a later time as it awakens in "Hades," or in forces chained in metals or bodily organs, as they are in the pure, prehuman state, unpolarized and thus including opposite qualities (hot-dry and cold-humid = "frozen fire" and "burning water"). This is confirmed further down by the text, in referring vulgar Mercury to the germ of Silver, or lunar Mercury, while the philosophical Mercury is joined to the *solar* Sulfur regarded as metallic quality. Ordinary human consciousness is *lunar,* namely reflected and living off reflections (consciousness of phenomena).

Vulgar Mercury carries within it the seed of Silver. But the other Mercury receives it from the Creator of heaven and earth, the solar Sulfur, in the metallic form and property. It is therefore the solar Magnet, just as the vulgar Mercury may be called a lunar Magnet. The fact that this is so can be seen by Mercury with that half-moon with which the Wise have represented it , discriminating it and cutting it off from the authentic solar Mercury (☿). We can also recognize the two Mercuries from the vapor that constitutes their Sulfur; and it can easily be seen why they are volatile—fixed or fugitive—and how sooner or later they let themselves be sublimated and precipitated; this is the *living way* to discern the two Mercuries.

Moreover be aware that just as Nature generated two Mercuries—solar and lunar—in the same way we can prepare, through the Art, out of those two stable bodies a corresponding Mercury. It is possible to obtain live Mercury from metalloids (*ex mediis metallis* = by metallic means) like Antimony, Bismuth, and Arsenic, but simply for medicinal purposes; with the exception of this excellent healing virtue of theirs, they should not be regarded or proclaimed to be philosophical Mercury, which is a universal solvent *(menstruum)* and is born twice from Mercury—*first* from the lunar one and *then* from the solar one—and thus can rightly be called *double* Mercury.

It is possible to extract and to distill lunar Mercury from the Saturnine body, though with much effort; it has the same nature and property as the lunar Mercury, insofar as the Moon was generated through Saturn. And just as from Saturn one can extract lunar Mercury, likewise from the mine of Venus it is possible to extract the warm solar Mercury, through Tartar and sal ammoniac.[90] Though the latter are held in great contempt, they

90. At the beginning of the *Chymica Vannus* that accompanies this translated text we find the following sentence: *"In cruce sub sphaera* (♀ = Venus) *venit Sapientia vera"* (The true Wisdom comes in the cross beneath the sphere). In Hermeticism, Tartar is connected to *Chaos,* to the philosophers' "matter" in the primordial, chaotic state, and it may allude to a particular method of "decomposition." Basilius Valentinus defines it as that which *dissolves* the metals (cf. A. J. Pernety, *Dict. Mytho-hermétique,* Paris, 1758, p. 480). Here we possibly find an allusion to violent methods in order to activate the deep force of solar Mercury, which were concealed by other Hermeticists under the symbol of "corrosive waters" and "strong waters": forms of inebriation and forms that are derived from a deep upheaval of the psychophysical organism. The extraction of the warm mercury from the mine of Venus may allude also to methods of sexual magic.

need to promote this operation together. Mercury of cold Saturn and Mercury of warm Venus: he who will know how to melt them down into oil will gain the Universal Solvent. He will hold the key with which all the Sulfurs can be made potable. But let us return to our main point.

Know that the Philosophers have two Saturns; under the aforesaid *double* mercurial spirit they understand those two Saturns from which this or that Mercury was extracted and their spirit distilled. Many have given the name of Gold to Lead and vice versa; but I mean the philosophers' Lead, which has remained unknown to this day. Analogously, the other Lead may well be the philosophers' Lead, but it is not regarded as such by everyone—it is argentiferous, and so forth—while the auriferous lead is rarely found in metals (it is used in laboratories under an incorrect name); not much is made of it, despite its white and bright yellow color. In its great weight and psychophysical character *(spirituale ac corporale)* it may be compared to Arsenic, insofar as—being generated by Arsenic and by similar elements—it is in the same family. And just as Arsenic is friendly to Arsenic, the same goes for this hidden and ancient Philosophical Lead.[91] Since the ancient Sages have used only two metals in their Great Magistery, I will limit myself to them; in regard to both these metals of the Wise I will shed the light of my own experience.

The Philosophers say that the first and the last metal are to be regarded as one and the same metal that can be used in the Art and for the making of the Universal Medicine. The *first* metal is the very sperm of the metals; from it, it is possible to bring to light in visible form the metallic fertilizing seed as well as Sulfur. We find this metal in the mine of Saturn. Root of the perfect metals, just as of the imperfect ones, it is endowed with a certain saturnine spirit and is manifested as the mine of Mercury. It is called Philosophical Lead or Philosophical Azoth, from which we are used to distil the

91. "Philosophical Gold" is the regeneration of the "ancient and occult Lead" that corresponds to the element Salt or to the body (in esoteric physiology, to that which in the body has mineral character—i.e., the skeleton, just as Saturn-Lead is the heaviest among the elements). This is connected with the arrested "primordial virility" (the emasculation of Saturn), and on the basis of its Greek etymology, the Arsenic, which is brought together with the Philosophical Lead of the text, refers exactly to this principle of virility.

Virgin's Milk, and it has a venereal property.[92] The *last* metal is called "last" because it has attained a maturity of perfect finality: the finality of metals consists in their being Gold, beyond which Nature does not operate in metals, but must cease and desist there, unless the dominating Art comes to its help. The latter, in a short time (but not without the help of Nature herself), goes beyond until a certain transparent and diaphanous body emerges from the solar mass: this is what the Philosophers call "crystallization" *(vitrificationem)*, and it is the highest and noblest thing Nature and Art can ever do and achieve. I can only briefly mention here how this crystallization must be prepared and performed.

Take that *magical* igneous element that is composed, as though from Sulfur and Niter, of two opposed infernal materials. With this infernal blazing Fire, begin on the border of Nature: attack and calcify those otherwise impregnable doors of the solar fort, namely Gold: thus one fire lights the other, one Sulfur the other. While this takes place, the element Fire dominates: that which in the solar compound is the second principle, inasmuch as the Fire in the Gold is called *soul* and Sulfur. Thus, when the Fire achieves victory, it is up to the element Water—namely to the humid and elusive Mercury—to fly toward its star. Since the mercurial spirit is the seat of the soul, and is called the link that connects soul and body, what arises out of it is a *first separation and the splitting of soul and body.* What needs to be employed for this is that cold metallic fire that is extracted from a certain mineral Saturn that has not yet been melted down, also known as the Mercury of Saturn. The latter, drawn out of that unfused and rigid Lead, does not burn: in other words, it does not run like ordinary Mercury. It has within itself a dry and earthly quality, thanks to which it can preserve the

92. As far as the first metal as sperm of the metals (the primordial generating and individuating power) is concerned, the allusion to a "*propagating* seed," of which it is the visible manifestation, and the allusion to its "venereal quality" could indicate the relationship existing between this force and the power of sex. The Art draws from it a "Virgin's Milk," or a force that will nourish "him who is born from a Virgin," through "immaculate conception." "Nature" is able to produce that Gold which is proper to the intellectual and volitional principle of human beings. Beyond this, the "Sacred Art" needs to operate in order to remove the limit and the finiteness proper to this Gold and to produce the supreme fulfillment of consciousness and force.

solar Sulfur. Make sure that it does not get burned and that it does not fly away with its own Mercury.[93]

When Gold is amalgamated with saturnine Mercury, it becomes a porous Gold.[94] Thus the infernal fire can calcinate that solid body better and faster, light up the solar fire throughout and thus reduce it to ashes. Then, through clear heavenly dew, we draw from it Sulfur. From the remaining mass, after a due reverberation, we lixiviate that most precious medicinal Salt of which the Wise have said, *"Metallic salt is the Philosophers' Stone."* Another Philosopher said: "Unless God created Salt, one could not make the Philosophers' Stone." But this Salt needs to be duly clarified with the spirit of wine. Having done that, it joins its Sulfur: and see, it is permeated by the cosmic spirit—that spirit which was distilled from saturnine Mercury—and it soon begins to putrefy and fixate in the same glass and furnace.[95] In this way the Great Work is completed until it reaches fermentation and increase; it is the universal medicine for all diseases. The souls of those who can use it are renewed and strengthened with every help they need . . .

The *benevolent* reader will undoubtedly be puzzled at the clear and radical teaching I have expounded so far: especially the teaching on that frigid

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93. This passage contains a wonderful synthesis of the Hermetic procedure, sufficiently explicit. "Gold" must here be understood as the purely personal and mental manifestation in man of the solar principle, namely "vulgar Gold." It needs to be calcified through fire—in other words it corresponds, in the terminology of Yoga, to the "slaying of the *manas*." Alchemists call this phase *mortificatio* (mortification) and *putrefactio* (putrefaction), which is followed by the liberating action of philosophical Water. Thus Bernard of Treviso talks about a King who takes off his red (solar) garment and wears a black one before taking a bath. This is a shift to the subtle or fluidic state, corresponding to the separation from the physical state. When the subtle is in a free state, and when the dry, "cold metallic fire" intervenes, one can proceed to the magical *fixing*. According to Sendivogius (*Novum Lumen Chemicum*, Venice, 1644, Tract. V, p. 31), this amounts to freezing warm water and joining the spirit to it.

94. The "porosity" of Sendivogius (ibid., Tract. X, pp. 50–51) is connected to the method opposite to the *violent* one. But here it seems that the two methods are united. Gold opens itself to "waters" and allows them to penetrate it in an initial "dissolution" and decomposition, which the infernal fire then brings to a deeper stage, until Gold, in its pure and absolute state, emerges from the decomposition.

95. The saying *"Unless there was Salt it would not be possible to make the Philosophers' Stone"* is very important. From the material body, the Self draws the sensation of self;

saturnine Mercury (and on that igneous-infernal *magical* element) without which nothing is worth learning in the entire alchemical science. The answer is this: even though I have put everything in clear sight (far too clearly for the experts), and in a more explicit way than any Philosopher has ever written about it, there are a few things that I have kept hidden: how it is possible to extract from a certain Saturn such an excellent and rare Mercury, and how to reduce it to a red spirit.[96] This can be attained in one way only, and through only one means. In regard to this I have given some hints: *but those who will not be favored by God will not be able to get them and not even suspect their existence.*

Not only have I kept partially hidden this adaptation of the frigid metallic fire, but also the preparation of that igneous magical key that, as you have often heard, is obtained from two opposite fires striving against each other, namely Sulfur and Niter. These fires, though they may be rightly called infernal fires in mutual opposition, must become the same thing and produce together the same effect. In order to understand how to bring about this unification, *ask God to illuminate your soul.* I have done my part in this little work and revealed to you more than enough. The reason that

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thus it remains the basis on which one needs to work, perfecting, integrating, and illuminating the power that has produced it until that *perfect body* is produced, which was mentioned in the Mithraic ritual in chapter IV. This *perfect body* is identical to the so-called "spiritual body" or "magical body." This is why the danger during operations is that Mercury may fly away, thus causing the fire not only to melt the metals, but to destroy them as well. It follows that the Mercury required for the Work is not vulgar Mercury, but a fixed Mercury; the fire required is not the strong one, but the subtle, androgynous, and tempered one. The Hermetic seal of the glass or *athanor* is required. This seal prevents the volatile portion from escaping and from hitting the upper part, thus condensing again and falling on the saline residues that it has left, and reacting on them. This reaction occurs according to a recurring circle of new sublimations and precipitations that ends only when all the residues are resolved and the two (the higher solar consciousness and the body) have become one. Then the *athanor* opens and out of it flies the Phoenix: the self-generating and immortal animal.

96. Saturn is the body: Mercury is related to the fluidic (= Moon) state that can be extracted from it, through which consciousness may enter into magical contact with the body itself. Red Mercury is ☿, or the fluidic state ignified through the *real* nature of Gold (= Sun). The latter comes to light in its turn only through immersion or solution of vulgar Gold in the first Mercury ☿.

I have done this is love for my neighbor, whom I would like to encourage with my little experience and lead back on the straight path. . . . It is also right that whatever is good be shared among all, or at least with those who have approached and dedicated themselves to the Philosophers and belong to their number. For the other outsiders, everything takes place so that "[t]hey have ears but hear not, they have eyes but see not." We will not cast pearls before swine, which do not care for them but besmirch them.

I will add something only about this one point, which could cause you great hesitations, concerning the first and second Saturn, or Mercury. Before you have heard: 1) from the Moon, and likewise from that frigid Saturn of Aries, it is possible to draw a certain Mercury, especially fit for the Philosophical Work; 2) from the mine of Venus it is possible to obtain a certain solar Mercury endowed of solar Sulfur, which I have called the "Mercury of the Sun," since it is employed to generate the Sun; 3) in spite of this, I have employed saturnine Mercury to break up the Gold. To the doubt that may ensue I will reply that we could employ red Mercury in a white lunar tincture. Just as one cannot travel from one extreme to the other without going through a middle point, likewise it is not possible to attain a red tincture without having first attained a white one. In this way, the *benevolent reader* can solve the problem by himself, and remember that here I have written only about the true and simple Universal and not about the most universal Universal.

The most universal Universal *(Universale generalissimum)* is produced, as explained above, from a double Mercury; it is animated and fermented with solar Sulfur, coagulated with permanent golden Salt, and further augmented ad infinitum, both in quantity and in quality, thanks to the two other Sulfurs. Quality, as life *(qualitas seu vita)*, feeds on Sulfur, and it increases with that aforesaid Mercury, which carries with itself not only the character and the power of a venereal property, but also the nature of frigid saturnine metal. It is therefore compared to a *double* Mercury—and is called *duplicated* Mercury—which has all the qualities: the quality of Venus, thanks to the hot Sulfur, and frigidity on the part of Saturn. The *benevolent and sincere Lover of the Art* would cast away any doubts and believe in the truth of my experience. In this way you will not be able to accuse me of lying, since I have not begged this out of other people's books,

in order to procure for myself fame and respect; on the contrary, *I have labored on it with the work of my hands, and it was only afterward that I realized what I should have known before.*[97]

The fundamental mystery of the Wise, as I have expounded it above, and that I have summarized again here, needs to be understood by you, sincere *Lover of the Art* [*tecnofilo*]: *for you must frequently and repeatedly read this summary of mine, over and over again, until you have been educated, both inside and out, on all things . . .*[98]

In the meantime, my summary is over, limited to the two *magical* constituents of Solvent or *duplicated* Mercury, refraining from describing the medicine on the basis of the mineral kingdom. Thus welcome, with grateful heart, these fruits of my labors: *magical* elements, Solvent and Universal Medicine *(Catholicus)*, and First Matter, with which any metal may be led back to its *three* principles, and the true Potable Gold must be obtained. You could not wish me to have made clearer to you the First Matter—and even both elements, including the igneous key—with such explicit words and constant lucidity.

97–98. The italics are ours. Let the reader of goodwill pay attention to these words, including those readers who may have become annoyed for not having understood much, despite our comments, from a first reading of the present text.

VIII

Abraxas

Magical Operations with "Two Vessels"–Reduplication

I have mentioned the composition of the Caduceus that is performed in a single vessel: in the body and powers of the single individual. I have also added that effects of greater importance can be attained through the force of a magical chain, a natural spirit, or a Being.

I will not discuss this yet, but only the magical composition performed in two vessels: that is, in two persons, in which the two components—the active and the passive, the Sun and the Moon, Sulfur and Mercury—are split in two, polarized and exalted separately.

Since there are two forms of Caduceus—one aimed at *vision,* which I instructed you on when discussing the Mirror (chapter III), and one aimed at *power,* which is obtained through the ignification of the astral light (chapter VI)—you will find here *two operations:* one is vision and relationship through a "pupil"; the other is preparation of the androgynous Mercury through *fluidic intercourse.*

You need to understand from the start that as a general rule the igneous force predominates in a man, while the lunar force does so in a woman. Thus one can use two people of different sex instead of preparing both elements in a single vessel. The usefulness of the procedure lies in the fact that in magical development you need first of all to give power and priority to the solar principle, and not open yourself to the humid, receptive, and volatile principle before you are perfectly sound and sure of yourself: otherwise magic is transformed into *mediumism* and descends to passive ecstasy at a lower psychic level, if not even to some form of obsession. Now you can remain completely positive and closed if at first another being attempts to exalt the opposite quality; then, by creating a relationship with it you will be able to guide and to learn, and eventually even absorb and resuscitate it in yourself, having already acquired the necessary qualification.

It is good if the woman whom you will use in the works of vision and communication with incorporeal beings is a *virgin*. In the state of virginity, as long as this state is more than merely physiological, a group of subtle forces has not yet undergone the modification, the polarization, and the desaturation that occur through sexual intercourse in a normal relationship, and thus, besides their greater purity and intensity, it is easier to concentrate them in the direction of initiatic practices.[99] Sometimes instead of women, children between seven and fourteen years of age are employed: during this age there are dominant subtle forces of formation and growth at a very energetic stage, and not yet altered by the vulgar Sulfur of the passional and emotional life of adolescents.

The subject must undergo a preparation according to the directives previously mentioned when talking about the Mirror. She should not be concerned with the active side of firmness, control, and stability, nor the subtle dosage and mixture of Sulfur and Mercury. She should only try to be open and receptive in every sense and from beginning to end, in other words, to extract and exalt exclusively, to the highest degree, the principle ☿. She needs to overcome the fear of a complete abandonment. The absence of a solar principle is supplied by an absolute trust in the operator and in his strength, a total submission to him, conjoined with a sincere and pure aspiration toward supersensible reality.

It is necessary to build a correct environment for the practices, which needs to be chosen possibly in the countryside or in an isolated or subterranean place, in which silence reigns supreme and where nobody will come and be a disturbance. What is needed is a separate room, its walls painted white, with the strictly necessary, new, simple, and clean instruments. The

99. Notice the double meaning of the words "eye" (pupil) and "virgin" in the Greek term κόρη that you can find in the title of a classical Hermetic text (κόρη κόσμου in Stob. *Phys.* XLI, 44–45). Among some primitive populations, who know more about this than so-called "civilized" people, young virgin girls are believed to be filled with a dangerous and mysterious force, and they are kept "isolated" almost like electric condensers. Sometimes this is done in huts above the earth, or made in such a way that no part of their naked body touches the earth, until they are led to marriage, which "discharges" them (cf. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, vol. III, ch. LX, sect. 3–5).

initial purification of the place needs to be done with fumigation of sulfur and by washing the floor with seawater or stream water: then, in the morning and in the evening, a little incense, myrrh, and fruits of laurel. This place must be reserved strictly for you: you must not allow anyone else to come in, for any reason, much less those who are drawn by mere curiosity. You will take the "pupil" there at the appointed time for practice. There you will use sandalwood as the dominant perfume, with very light doses of the planetary and zodiac perfume of the "pupil" herself.

It is good to concentrate preparation during the period of a full moon, while on your part you will exalt the force of command. Complete chastity, in body and mind. Healthy food, excluding meats. Physical and mental purity. It is necessary to clearly isolate the "emotion" element in the "pupil," in order to obtain a limpid abandonment. The most propitious times are dry, clear nights.

This is how the operation proceeds: first of all, open the windows, burn the perfumes, and, facing east, *namely toward dawn, pray*—I mean: formulate in a distinct way the idea and *desire* its realization with trust. The idea in the first place is that the darkening entities that dominate the senses and bar the thresholds should depart, and that the turbid ghosts contained within the soul should vanish. A formula, such as the following, is to be pronounced in a low tone, facing east, focusing the mind on every word:

"Put to flight before Thee, Power of the rising Sun, the great night of human fever, of ghosts, the phantasms of pride, the larvae of concupiscence. You are Light. Let the Light be in me, on whom the yearning of earthly things no longer presses."[100]

It is not necessary that the "pupil" hear this invocation of yours: but she may formulate one herself, in tune with her soul, before sitting before the Mirror, which needs to be prepared as I have explained. You, while standing behind, as the fixation is established, realize a sense of total mastery over her, a sense of enveloping and controlling her: mentally *command* the detachment of her sight, *insert* your strength in its abandonment, in order to propitiate it and push it forward. Once the state of light is attained, invoke and formulate what you want to know, *command* her to

100. This is a variation of a formula given by Kremmerz. The expression "pupil" is also Kremmerz's. (Note by UR)

see. The invocation may be addressed to the Sun, to the Seven Angels, or to a special Power that you know is connected to the thing that the operation is aimed toward. You may find invocatory formulas in Agrippa and in Peter of Abano. The Third Logos of the Mithraic Ritual (chapter IV) is also efficacious.

It is necessary for the "pupil" to almost lose her self-awareness through complete trust and penetration with your supporting strength, so that she will not oppose any reaction, and no manifestation may terrorize her and thus interrupt the operation.

She will reveal everything she sees. Then you will direct her to a further vision. I will add that on the basis of the knowledge that comes to you thus, while the state of communication with the supersensible persists, you can cast spells and commands to the powers, dangerous as it may be during operations of this type. In any event, make sure that the spell will take effect at a later time and with a *consciousness absolutely distinct from that which awaits the revelation.* If during this waiting, instead of perfect *neutrality* there is a hidden desire to attain one particular content of a vision instead of another, what will ensue is the mistaken image of the fulfillment of this desire.

Once you have attained a deep, effective relationship with your "pupil," her vision can be transmitted directly to you.

If the operation does not succeed, keep at it, be silent and pray, repeating it at the same time.

One of the main obstacles is the "projection" of what Kremmerz has called *similar natures.* These are impulses and desires that have resisted purification—either in you or in the "pupil"—or which lie in ambush underneath the threshold of consciousness. These forces absorb the power that produces detachment and use it to *project themselves,* to externalize themselves in *fluidic beings.* Evil therefore consists not so much in the fact that they disturb and falsify the entire vision, reducing it to ghosts of the "Self," but rather in the fact that the projection has given them an autonomous life—I would almost say: a *personality.* Being your creatures, they rebound on you, feed on your life, until they become obsessive forms.

I have already mentioned to you that at a later time you can *breathe in* and absorb the virtue developed in the "pupil," bringing back to unity the operation with two vessels.

For the corresponding preparation by magical *action* of the Caduceus, which I called the "second," one takes *love* as the ignifier of the fluidic force.

The fire of Eros, which is habitually polarized in a downward direction, or toward sex and the animal nature, is isolated in the fluidic body and nourished sufficiently to produce the state of exaltation necessary to make that androgyne and igneous mercury by which the magical projection is set in action.

This requires particular conditions in regard to the woman. Virginity is not among them, but in this practice, as opposed to the true and actual operations of sexual magic that you will be told about at the proper time, a certain purity is necessary. The woman also needs to have quite an intense preexisting sentiment. As for you, if you are far enough advanced on the path as you need to be for this, you will be able to create and actualize this in yourself on command. But you cannot demand this of the woman: she must quite naturally *love you.* The difficulty will be to find a young woman who consents on the basis of this sentiment to follow you onto the plane of *magical love,* and who also has the disposition for it.

It is necessary, at least at this stage, that the *eros* which is the instrument of the work should be not merely sexual desire and sexual craving, but actual *love:* something more subtle and vast that embraces the *entire* other person, as a desire for the *whole* of her. But its intensity should not be any the less for this. I can put it like this: *you must desire the soul, the essence of the other, just as you may desire her body.* Take note that if this condition is not rigorously realized, not only the operation will be ineffective, but also you will be exposed to considerable psychic perils. I have told you that elsewhere we shall speak of procedures that also use sexual intercourse. But be assured that in order to operate in those, it is necessary first to have learned the method of love that exalts itself without contact, which is not tied to the idea of this contact and of sexual satisfaction.

You should also know that any form of love *is already magic in itself:* the rapture of lovers is already an intoxication in the astral light, a fluidic intoxication. But they are not aware of this. You should be. Then you can proceed in a circular fashion: because *eros* facilitates fluidic contact for

you, and the fluidic state in turn exalts *eros*. Thus you can produce in yourself a vortex of intensity that is inconceivable to the ordinary man and woman; and you can guess what the perils I have mentioned may be, and that I will address when treating the magic that uses carnal embrace.

The outward technique is simple. Use as perfume musk, amber, or red rose in fairly intense saturation, adding if possible a shade of dove's blood. The most propitious hour is toward dawn. Sit opposite one another, immobile, yourself facing east. Having evoked the fluidic state (which presupposes this faculty in *both:* ☿ is presupposed, and it is a question of transforming it into ☿ by projecting into it the masculine ☉), *love one another, desire one another,* thus, without motion or contact, in *continuous* mode, breathing in reciprocally and "vampirically," in an exaltation that increases without fear of possible zones of vertigo. You will have a sense of effective *amalgamation,* a feeling of the other in your whole body, not through contact but in a subtle embrace that is felt there in every point and penetrates you *like an intoxication that possesses the blood of your blood.* This will carry you, at the limit, to the threshold of a state of ecstasy, which is the point of magical equilibrium in which the ignified and supersaturated fluid can be attracted like lightning, and projected into the idea.

In this operation you must again master the subtle play of dosage of the two opposing principles in the regime of the fire, while in the woman the element of *love* suffices, to which she gives her whole self. In the magus, the progressive exaltation of the *fire* must be led by a *cold* principle that never grows less by itself, but on the contrary rises along with the growth of the fluidic vortex and becomes illuminated. If this principle is lacking, every magical possibility collapses, and, when nothing worse occurs, everything can end up on a plane analogous to certain mystical states. In these, too, there is an erotic desire transferred unconsciously to the subtle plane by way of suitable images (the "Celestial Bridegroom," etc.),[101] and exasperated to the point of bursting out in a special and solitary form of psychic orgasm, described as joy and beatitude.

Thus: an exaltation, a vortex that always has at its center the Self,

101. Many so-called "divine apparitions" of the women mystics, compared to these, are of no more value than the visualizations "of similar kinds" that Abraxas was speaking of earlier. (Note by UR)

detached and apparently absent in the full abandonment to Eros and in the "amalgamation," but which, at the crucial point—at the perfect cooking point of the Mercury—suddenly intervenes, takes charge of the energy, fixes it, and hurls it whither it will.

The practice of the *Mirror,* as expounded in chapter III, includes *two* dependent realizations: the liberation of vision from the eye and its activation in a "space" that is the astral light itself—which liberation is made possible by a certain detachment of the subtle body from the physical body.

Now I will give you directions for the complete liberation of the former body, so as to be able to move it in space, and you along with it, leaving behind your physical body. In vulgar occultism this is called *"astral traveling."*

In this realization, too, what operates is the *will,* as solar and central force ☉. Keep firmly in mind that the true will comes from possession of one's self. It is strong in proportion to how absolute and energized is the possession of the self. Its force is that of the *determination* which commands it; and the force of such determination depends on the degree of centrality of the "Self." This solar, calm, decisive, and central will is *our gold* ☉. In it you must give precise shape to your new goal.

The realization has three phases: 1) detachment unaccompanied by consciousness during sleep; 2) the same, but with consciousness; 3) conscious detachment in the waking state.

The first aspect itself has progressive stages. Give yourself these tasks in turn:

a) Move with the subtle body a light object near your bed; b) Move it in a distant place; c) Appear in sleep to another person; d) Make your *presence felt* to a waking person; e) Appear in visible form to a waking person—and that is the final and perfect stage.

Now I will show you the technique. As sleep approaches, when the spontaneous thoughts gradually attenuate and subside, you should fix your *whole* mind on the *single* thought of exteriorization. Represent to yourself minutely and distinctly in sequence all the acts required by your goal: the detachment of the double, the requisite movements, the route that it should take, its arrival at the detemined place, performing its action, its return,

the reabsorption of the double in the body, and the full memory in the morning.

Think of all this with *will:* with energetic and at the same time calm, secure, and *continuous* will—without distractions, without violence or force, with a sense of security, lucid and in full possession of yourself. The imagination of the act, accomplished in all its details, should have been created before one feels the first signs of sleepiness. Then abandon yourself to sleep, *as if it were a thing already done.* Remembrance in the morning, as I have already told you, will be helped by spontaneous waking and a light perfume of musk, rose, or Florentine iris.

In the case where you want to go to find someone, *think* first of that person, evoking her if possible with the help of her perfume, or by placing beneath your pillow some of her hair or an object that she has worn for some time close to her body. Keep in mind that unless you wield a very great force, the other person must have been warned, must possess a certain subtle sensibility, and, besides, must *want* this phenomenon herself. This will manifest more easily in the case of a bond of natural sympathy or an initiatic one.

If you are already fairly advanced in magical practices, and also in those indicated by Leo for preserving a certain consciousness during sleep, and if then you can support your consciousness with the subtle body instead of exclusively with the physical body, then you may try to partake directly of the subtle body's journey: you may *slip out* together with it at the moment of falling asleep, and then lead it where you will, instead of just remembering the experience, if indeed you can, or just ascertaining the reality by means of the effects: the actual moving of objects, or the actual vision or sensation of yourself on the part of another person.

The third stage of realization is the deliberate exit during the waking state. You should be in your magical cabinet, completely relaxed and with all the senses suspended; it is also preferable to close your ears with wax. Having reached the state of the most profound *silence,* let every thought be stilled and the sense of the body vanish; then concentrate all your spirit on the sole will—intense, infrangible, and as though materialized—of *exiting.*[102] When

102. If you wish, you can attain the state of concentration not directly but with the help of the mirror, following all that I have told you in chapter III, and acting at the moment of the appearance of etheric light.

the instinctive jolts that I have mentioned try to hold you back from the incipient realization of your will, let them meet this present will like a bar of steel placed across your mind, against which they shatter, cut off the instant they are born. A neutral state will occur—then you will find yourself somewhere and *will realize that you are no longer there with your physical body.*

Now beware that you do not lose your *sangfroid:* know that you can go where you will, always realizing that you are an immaterial being moved directly by the mind. The power to act in this state on things and persons depends on the degree of ignification achieved by the fluidic body, and on the energy of the "Gold" principle.

I said: *"always realizing that you are not a material being."* This has a double meaning: 1) Neutralizing a possibly undesirable visibility of yourself on the part of others; 2) Annulling any emotion arising from the habits of the physical body, when the subtle body finds itself in certain circumstances of the physical environment, which, however, can have no power over it. I will explain.

Suppose that during your exit you encounter something that, if you were there in the physical body, would cause a bruise or a wound. If you do not realize that in this state you *cannot* be bruised, but instead realize the situation in the terms of the physical body, an astral image will be formed in a state of panic and shock that will immediately hurl itself at your physical body and imprint on it the same transformation; you will find yourself stunned and bruised in your bed or laboratory.

I am not telling you fables. Even parapsychology and ethnology have come to accept things of this sort, for example, in the cases of persons found dead or wounded in their beds after a night in which there was a hunt after "witches" or "werewolves."[103] The subtle body is made from the group of profound forces that preside over the elements and funcions of the animal body; and thus their modification is immediately transmitted to the latter. But I repeat that such a modification works solely through your mind, by suggestion. If you hold on firmly to the knowledge of your nonmateriality and your *sangfroid*, nothing in the physical world can do you any harm.

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103. A strange circumstance in these findings is that only the body receives the wounds, while the clothing remains intact. (Note by UR)

If at any moment you wish to return, and do not immediately succeed, evoke the imagination of your physical body where you have left it, realize it intensely, and insert into this imagination your calm and firm will to return.

To avoid another sort of danger, I advise you to trace around your body, before preparing to exit, a magic circle with the proper conjuration, but in such a way as not to paralyze the exit itself. Here is the reason, in brief: *there are many dark beings in the invisible world that have no body, but which crave one, and which therefore throw themselves in the moment they see an "empty" one.* And it is not said that you will notice, when you have returned to the normal state, that you are no longer just yourself. The danger is less when the operation takes place in the sleeping state, because then there is *someone else* who is charged to keep watch on the envelope you have left behind.

Naturally, you will take care that no one enters, that no knock or loud noise should occur in the place where your body rests. Otherwise the consequences could be very grave.

A last advice: if you have moral scruples, know that all that you do in the subtle body to a person who does not wish it—even if only with the exterior consciousness informed by some prejudice or other—and who neverless remains defenseless before your occult action (the only defense is the self-canceling in that person of the memory of the event), can cause grave disturbances to that person, to the extent of hysteria and personality change.

When you return from your exit to the waking state, be warned that the first time you may feel a state of deep prostration, a complete asthenia of the whole organism. You should react, shake yourself, making use even of a cold shower and violent gymnastic exercises. There follows a state of agitation, of feverish exuberance, and last a third phase of vague and general fatigue, loss of appetite, and difficulty in thinking. Anticipate all this in such a way that when it actually happens you are not impressed by it and do not let it take you over, rather waiting calmly for everything to return to its normal state. These repercussions may last several hours, or at most a few days.

Tibetan Initiatic Teachings

The "Void" and the "Diamond-Thunderbolt"

The esoteric Tibetan teachings found here are taken from the Bde-Michog-Tantra *(in Sanskrit:* Shrîcakrasambhâra*), which was attributed to Yeshes-Senge, a monk of the gNas-rNying sect, published for the first time in 1919 with an introduction, a synopsis, and a partial English translation by the lama Kazi Dawa Samdup, in volume VII of the series of* Tantrik Texts *edited by Arthur Avalon. The excerpts published here correspond to pages 54–56 and 77–82 of this edition.*[104]

These are two contemplative processes, the first aimed at detaching the mind, the second to free the senses, in order to attain samadhi *in relation to various objects in a series that leads to the supreme state of* shûnyatâ.

In both sets of instructions the reader will notice how the various images are connected to particular points in the human body on which the mental focus is directed. In the first set we begin with images of deities that are progressively interiorized and simplified, until the mind identifies with them and realizes their essence as rDorje. *The term "rDorje" (in Sanskrit:* vajra*) has the double meaning of "diamond" and "thunderbolt." It designates that which is hard, permanent, and indestructible like a diamond, and that which is sudden and irresistible like a thunderbolt. This is the basic principle of the magical resurrection. The supreme, triple secret of Tibetan Tantrism is said to be the "diamond-thunderbolt" of the mind, word, and body.*

There is an interesting relationship between vajra *and* shûnyatâ *in these doctrines.* Shûnyatâ *is a term of Mahayana Buddhism. While in original Buddhism the concept of* nirvana, *which does not at all mean annihilation (see chapter VI), is opposed to* samsâra, *Mahayana Buddhism conceives* samsâra *and* nirvana *as two coexistent aspects of a higher reality, or better, a higher state of consciousness, called* shûnyatâ. Shûnyatâ *literally means "emptiness," "void." It is the state of an absolute metaphysical freedom, a depth that can contain and will anything, without being altered or moved. Understood as ba-*

104. These excerpts appear here in the original Samdup translation, with slight modifications made to reflect how the UR Group presented the text to their Italian readers. (Editor's note)

sis and substance of all things (in Tibetan it is called Kungzhi*), its identification to* vajra *shows it as the same radiant, incorruptible essence, consisting of pure activity, which the Hellenic traditions claimed the intelligible world or the world of "beings" was made of.*

In regard to the second group of contemplations, we need to add the following. The world that we know is only our world, a world of images that the mind projects outward. We mistake these images for reality and do not realize that we are constantly walking in circles around ourselves. In order to attain "knowledge" and the vision of the world of the real, we need to withdraw our consciousness from the images and to suspend the impulse whereby we project outward that which acts within our inner world, affected by desire. It is possible to withdraw and to concentrate the mind on a minute, fixed point and to receive in it the sensible impressions, until an ensuing transformation allows us to recognize things as they are in themselves, and no longer as shadows of phenomena. This is the meaning of samadhi. *This should suffice as a general orientation for the second group of practices. They lead to a* samadhi, *first in regard to the various senses, and then, through this* samadhi, *to a higher type of* samadhi, *which is the realization of* shûnyatâ.

Imagine[105] in one's navel[106] a white eight-petaled lotus.

In the center of this white lotus is a lunar disk. Upon this disk there are the personifications of the Diamond-Thunderbolt *(rDorje-Sems-Pah*—in Sanskrit: *Vajra-sattva)* and of His Spouse *(rDorje-sNyems-ma)* in close embrace, the Mantra "HUM" being in their hearts.[107]

105. The reader should be aware that instructions of this type presuppose a "creative state" *(bsKyedrim)* of the mind, which is necessary in order to make the various images "work" properly. It is the magical state of a more or less complete "fluidic exaltation." A. David-Neel (*Mystiques et magiciens du Thibet,* Paris, 1929, p. 133) notes that "in Tibetan, 'to imagine' *(migpa)* refers to a concentration of one's thought that is pushed until the objectification of the subjective, imagined image is achieved. It is a state of trance during which imagined facts and places completely replace those that are perceived in the state of normal consciousness."

106. The navel is connected to the *solar* plexus, which is the main center of the fluidic forces in the human body.

107. The God and His Bride correspond to the double aspect of every metaphysical principle: the former, fixed and central (corresponding to *nirvana* and to the adamantine aspect of *vajra*); the latter, dynamic, creative, and radiant (corresponding to *samsâra* and

Then imagine that rays of light issue from the "HUM" in all directions, vividly defining in the mind both the chief Devatâ (God) and the surrounding space as the vessel, and the other Devatâs and Beings occupying it as the vessel's content. Fix the attention on this mental picture. Then imagine that the rays of light emitted from the "HUM" excite all these into activity. The process is like that of a magnet exciting movement of particles of iron dust (filings).

Then, as the rays are gradually drawn back, imagine that all the external space and its contents are drawn inward and absorbed into the form of the principal external Deity (Heruka and His consort). This process is likened to the absorption of mercury by cow dung.

Next of the two principal Devatâs the female is absorbed in the male, and the two into one face and two hands. This process is likened to that of a tortoise contracting its limbs.

Then the consort of the external (god) Heruka[108] is absorbed in the male and this into the Diamond-Thunderbolt in the navel. The consort of this Deity, too, sinks into the male. Then gradually the male figure itself sinks into the "HUM" in the heart and the "HUM" gradually resolves itself into the Bindu[109] (dot). This process is likened to that of meteoric lights dissolving into each other. Then finally even the Bindu itself gradually becomes fainter and fainter until it fades away and disappears altogether, a process that is likened to salt dissolving in water.

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to the thunderbolt aspect of *vajra*). Their embrace represents their connection. The mantra HUM in Tibetan secret doctrine serves as a synthesis of the various metaphysical potencies corresponding to the various parts of its symbol. Meditation is focused on these parts.

108. In the technique, the expression "external God"—and also "external cult"—must be referred to images of the Gods and the essences that are thought to be objective beings. But in these schools it is explicitly taught that such Gods are merely creatures of the mind, employed to introduce a person to certain metaphysical experiences. During practice, the "external forms" follow the "internal forms." The image is reabsorbed and the mind directly assimilates the corresponding meaning contained in it, until everything is reduced to *shûnyatâ* (cf. the commentary to the text, pp. 34–37). This is the integral, or final, state of contemplation *(bsKyed-rim)* mentioned further on.

109. Thus we have a series that in meditation is realized backwards, from the outside to the inside; from the manifested and from the image to the un-manifested and to the essence. Dot (sometimes represented on the forehead), HUM in the heart, HUM in the navel, androgynous Image of the deity, Divine Couple.

Such are the five principle processes of meditation illustrated by what are called the five radical similes.

In the uncurtailed or unabridged process *(rDzogs-rim)* the mental pictures *(sNang-va)* are like dresses, light rays, waves of water; but in themselves and according to their own true nature they are like dancers, the sun, and the ocean.[110] The final process of absorption and absence of all thoughts is likened to that of a bubble sinking back into water, or a rainbow melting away into the skies.

So the process is illustrated in various manners by various similes.

Finally, the keeping of the mind in a state of tranquillity devoid of objects is called the process of concentration on the Diamond-Thunderbolt *(rDorje-Sems-dPah = shûnyatâ)*.

Assuming that he has attained to the stage of firm concentration of the mind and that he wishes to proceed further in the perfect or final stage (meditation on the formless), he should proceed thus:—Either in the morning (or any other time) let him take an easy position, cross-legged, and go through as a preliminary step the previously described meditation on Forms *(bsKyed-rims)*. Let him imagine that the HUM inside his heart sheds out rays of light on all outer space and the objects therein. They are all gathered within the body. The Female Devatâ, too, is drawn in through the nostrils into one's own heart. Having thought of oneself as the two-handed (Heruka), imagine the Guru on one's head.[111] Put forth intense faith in him, and pray: "I beseech thee, cause pure *samadhi* to grow in my mind."

Then imagine on the (Tibetan) letter "A" a lunar disk, red and white, about the size of half of a pea inside one's heart. Upon the lunar disk

110. In other words, one realizes that what has form and the character of apparition is related to its essence like a dancer is related to his clothes moving with him, or like the sun to the rays of its own light, or like the ocean to the waves of its own surface.

111. The Teacher (guru) can be an objective figuration that fixes the ideal that the practitioner strives to realize: a symbolic form that at first is animated in a relationship of devotion and dedication, and eventually is reabsorbed into the effective realization. This is the case of a real carrier of "spiritual influences," with which one happened to have come in contact with. In this case, the visualization indicated by the text aims at actualizing such influences for the positive outcome of the ritual.

imagine a light-point (a zero or Bindu) about the size of a mustard seed that is the concentrated form of one's mind. Fix the mind on that and regulate the breath gently (literally, "make it a gentle pair"). When one is well practiced, the mind is held and does not run astray, but remains fixed. Then one attains the blissful and clear *samadhi.*

When one attains stability or firmness in that *(samadhi),* then transfer the imagination to another of the sense organs.[112] Go through the preliminary step described above. For the actual method: imagine within the two pupils that there are two very fine bright white points, one in each eye.

Close the eyes and imagine in your mind that the points are there. When the mind gets accustomed to that, then look on various objects... On being well practiced the point is constantly and vividly present to the mind's eye. No matter on whatever object the eye may fall, *samadhi* is produced. Having achieved stability in that, draw in the point within the heart, and imagine that the latter gains great brilliancy and clearness, and keep the mind tranquil (literally, at a level: *mNyamzbhag*); this will produce *samadhi* of the most excellent kind, or the state of Tranquillity.[113]

After this, transfer the imagination to the ears. The preliminary steps are as described before. For the actual meditation:— Imagine two blue Points or Dots upon two lunar disks the size of half a pea inside each ear and meditate upon them, in a place free from noise. When you have succeeded in fixing the mind upon them, listen to sounds, at the same time keeping the mind fixed upon the two Points and not letting it stray from them. On being practiced in that, one attains vividness of the mind-picture and *samadhi* follows on hearing sound. When one has gained stability in this, withdraw the Points inside the heart and imagine that the Points have

112. It is well known that the Hindu teachings regard the mind as a sixth sense and the sense organs as mere instruments from which the corresponding faculties can even be detached and used directly, as it happens in *samadhi.*

113. In other words, one attains the vision in supersensible form of those things that are only partially perceptible via sensible sight: occult powers of forms and colors. After this contact, the concentrated mind shifts to the heart, in which it produces a *samadhi* of a higher degree. We may note that these instructions are those mentioned in a confused way by Rudolf Steiner—in regard to particular points on which one needs to concentrate the mind that has been freed from the senses in order to know the forces that have formed and preside over the various organs of the senses.

gained blazing brilliancy and vividness. From this excellent *samadhi* or Tranquility (state of mental level) is produced.

Then transfer the imagination to the Nose. The preliminaries are the same as above:—Imagine a yellow Point on a lunar disk in the cavity of each nostril in a place free from any odor, and concentrate your mind on that. When the mind is fixed, smell various odors, keeping the mind fixed on the yellow Points, without letting the mind stray away. When one gets used to that, on the perception of odors there is produced *samadhi*. When firmness is gained in this (state), draw the Points into the heart. By this, brilliancy and vividness of the Point is produced and practice in this produces *samadhi*.

Next transfer the imagination to the Tongue. Preliminaries the same as above:—Imagine a red Point on a lunar disk at the root of the tongue and meditate on it, without tasting any flavor. Concentrate your mind on it, do not let it stray. Then, when the mind is fixed on the Point, taste various flavors, keeping the mind concentrated on the Point. Then draw it inside the heart. When the Point attains brilliancy and vividness, *samadhi* is produced through the sense of taste.

Then transfer one's imagination to the (entire) body. Preliminaries the same as above. Either at the root of the secret parts (that is, the junction of the penis and the scrotum), or on your forehead, imagine a green Point on a lunar disk, and fix your mind on it without touching anything. When your mind has attained some degree of fixity on that spot, try concentration, touching various things and keeping the mind from straying. When vividness of the Point is obtained, practice until it is quite firm, then draw the Point in the place of touch into the Point within the heart, and meditate upon that, until great brilliance and vividness is obtained, which will produce Tranquillity or excellent *samadhi*.[114]

Then after that, transfer the imagination to the mind, which moves everywhere. Preliminaries same as above. Actual process:—Imagine a very small pink Point on the top of that already imagined to be within the heart.

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114. Overall, these are procedures that have two degrees. In the first degree one obtains a subtle perception that is transformed (see what Leo has explained in chapter III); this sensation is then led to the heart, in which it acquires light, opening itself up and leading to what is formless.

Try the meditation in a very quiet place at first. When you have succeeded in concentrating your mind, try the meditation in company where you are sure that some evil passions will be excited such as lust or the like. Then imagine that the chief passion—*Moha*[115] (infatuation)—which accompanies all other evil passions is concentrated in it. Think that it is absorbed into a blue Point. Fix the mind on that. On getting accustomed in that (practice), passions will not arise; or should they do so, they are controlled by the mind. When one has attained firmness in that, sink the blue Point into the pink Point, and that into the white and red Point below it. The last sinks into the moon-disk, which in its turn is dissolved or disappears in the sky like a cloud (that has disappeared). Then there remains only Emptiness *(shûnyatâ* or *sTongpa)*, in which the mind is to be kept at a level. This will produce the profound tranquil state *samadhi* called *Zhi-gNas* (literally, "Resting-in-peace"). Then rising from the state of Tranquillity *(samadhi)*, imagine again the lunar disks and the Points to be present or springing forth simultaneously: and that one's ownself, too, is at once transformed into the Heruka (God). Regard external objects as being only visible and apparently true, but having no independent and absolute reality in themselves.[116] Meditating thus till each stage has shown its sign of perfection or proficiency, one at last attains proficiency or perfection in the whole, as a result of which one obtains profound Tranquillity, which is the realization of *Shûnyatâ*, which is bliss and clarity. Continuation in these practices produces the knowledge of the path *(mThong-Lam)*, from is produced Buddha-hood. This is the stage of conferring grace and blessing *(bdag-byndrlabs-pahi)* on oneself, accompanied by Bîja *(Sabön)*.[117]

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115. *Moha*, which Dawa Samdup renders as *infatuation*. It is related to the concepts of early Buddhism, such as "mania," "attachment," and "craving."

116. This knowledge is opposed to the *hJig-rTen-pahi-yeshes*, a Tibetan expression designating "worldly knowledge" that regards things as real in themselves, rather than appearances the effective substance of which is emptiness, *shûnyatâ*. The latter is called *Mi-rtog-pahi-yeshes*, an expression that contains the idea of a knowledge that occurs in the absence of representations or thoughts, according to what has been said in regard to *samadhi*.

117. "Seeds" (in Sanskrit: *bîja*) are things and beings realized by consciousness during *samadhi*, in the state of λόγοι σπερματικοί, as individuating and radiant principles in which they have their essential generation. In alchemical terms they would be "solar Sulfurs" of the "metals."

Arvo

On the Counter-Initiation

Those who attempt to overcome human limitations and yearn to attain knowledge and power need to be aware of the existence of what, using René Guénon's term, one may call the *counter-initiation*. They also need to have an idea of the various forms assumed by it, as well as of the different means it employs to achieve its goals.

As a starting point, we may take the general idea that forces exist which attempt to insert themselves into the human domain, both at an individual and at a collective level, not only in order to mislead every aspiration to true spirituality, but also in order to create new currents, suggestions, and ideological systems. These are such as to blur the vision of truth, to falsify values, to favor the emergence of inferior influences, namely of every form of materialism, disorder, and subversion in civilizations.

The opposition between the forces of "good" and "evil" is a commonplace in religions; however, this does not adequately deal with the issues at stake. It is not simply a question of the moral and religious order, but of an action much larger, objective, and concrete, which the representatives of religion themselves often fail to recognize, at times even falling unconsciously as victims to it.

I will limit myself here to a few considerations that are specifically related to the disciplines dealt with in this book. However, some general remarks may first be in order. Generally speaking, there is no subversive movement in history and in human thought that does not have its "occult" origins. What needs to be understood is that one of the most recent "confections" devised by the dark forces is the "positivist" theory, which adamantly denies the existence of such backgrounds and claims that everything in human affairs can be explained through tangible historical causes. Isn't this "positivist" mentality the one that best lends itself to the hidden schemes of the forces active behind the scenes? Some Catholic

thinker has poignantly suggested that the most recent trick of the devil is to persuade people that he does not exist.[118]

In principle, every revolution, subversion, antitradition, and demagogy is branded with the visible seal of a nonhuman force responsible for urging the masses on and getting them drunk on this or that ideology. De Maistre has written many pages of perennial value on this topic. The purely political and social consideration of the revolutionary phenomenon mistakes exteriority with essence. The essence of every revolution is something that is not so much directed against people and institutions, but rather against the spirit; in some extreme cases—an elucidation of specific examples would be superfluous—a revolution may even appear as a Satanic act.

That aside, René Guénon has been an expert in identifying the influences that have worked behind the scenes and produced what is generally called the "modern mentality," beginning with domains such as science that are supposed to be immune to such actions. Every form of materialism and scientism amounts in effect to suggestions and limitations of horizons that are too organized and tendentious for us to assume that their origin and diffusion are spontaneous and simply caused by human stupidity: especially when we notice the precise convergence of the practical effects of all that with the main goals, elsewhere more visible, of the counter-initiation. Guénon was correct when he wrote:

> *What is truly strange, and would even be comical, if this were not a serious, not to say sinister issue, is that materialism itself, which claims to be able to shed light on every mystery, emerges from some very mysterious and shady background; the same is true, from another point of view, of the very notion of "matter" that is at its basis, but which is certainly one of the most enigmatic and unintelligible domains imaginable.*

The fact that human beings—continues Guénon—have come to conceive as ordinary and normal a life that is reduced to its lowest possibilities; and that they identify as reality, and even as most eminent reality,

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118. Cf. "Les faits mystérieux de Beauring," in *Études carmélitaines*, 1933, p. 11: "The demon has a thousand tricks up his sleeve, and his great art in this world, where almost no one believes anymore, is to have his existence denied, because it would be a proof of the existence of the supernatural." (Note by UR)

whatever is tangible, visible, touchable, and measurable—this is indeed the effect of an *infatuation,* of a sort of magic circle that has led to the atrophy and exclusion of the possibilities of every higher vision and sensibility. And the counterpart of this magic circle is a conception of history that assumes that the way in which man today regards things is sane and "normal," corresponding to a civilization that more than any other claims to be "enlightened" and free from superstitions.

However, we must keep in mind that the counter-initiation applies itself to a different direction and acts in a different way when the magic circle just mentioned becomes weaker, and when people begin to suspect anew that there is indeed an invisible domain beyond the visible one, that there is a deeper and more mysterious consciousness than ordinary everyday consciousness, and all this not as theory but as reality. "Openings" of this kind are taking place in wide sectors of the population in our contemporary civilization, due to various circumstances. Corresponding to this but more visible is the action of influences aimed at preventing such changes from producing positive results, but instead leading people into even graver dangers and degradations than could or can ever be produced by materialism and scientism.

What is employed here is a *diversionary tactic,* which is efficacious wherever one is ignorant that beyond the normal world there are the worlds of the supernormal and of the subnormal; that the removal of the limits of ordinary consciousness may occur in the direction of the superpersonality and superconsciousness, but also as in the direction of the subpersonality and of a reduced consciousness; and finally, that beyond sensible and "natural" reality there is not only the sphere of the supernatural, but also that of the subnatural and of an inferior psychism. All this is completely ignored, it seems, by the various currents of contemporary occultism and "spiritualism," not to mention "metapsychics," psychoanalysts, and the like. The people who belong to these groups, due to their narrow-minded views and methods, do not even suspect the existence of this principle. Now, both Guénon and Evola have revealed the existence of such counterfeits, confusions, ideological and practical deviations in contemporary "spiritualism" and occultism. Thus the legitimate suspicion arises that what is at work here is a secret, nonhuman, intelligent action, the specific purpose of which

is to lead every spirit that attempts to leave the magic circle of practical materialism in a downward rather than upward direction; not toward the higher personality but toward the subpersonality; not toward true spirituality, and metaphysical and initiatic knowledge, but toward the world of an inferior psychism, consisting of phenomena, nebulous visions, and sensations, which end by inhibiting every possibility of authentic development, if not actually causing the alteration and disintegration of the spiritual unity. This is precisely the purpose of the counter-initiation. As we can see, we thereby return to the order of ideas that is of paramount interest to our readers. When considering the growth of sects, lodges, and movements of every shade, our readers must realize that the confusion we have described is very widespread and more dangerous than ever, especially considering that there is a virtually total lack of people invested with both the competence and the authority to denounce it as it deserves.

The spiritual deviation is promoted by the attraction exercised on the majority of people, first by everything of a sensational and "mysterious" character (such that today a certain "occultism" is often on the level of "thriller" movies and mystery novels), and second by everything that is "phenomenal." Concerning the latter, the illusion extends also to people of a certain intellectual level, to people who are not mere spiritualists or metapsychics, but who nevertheless would like to enter the initiatic world. These people believe all too easily that phenomena are always sensible signs of a spiritual realization. The truth is otherwise, since in a certain ambience the same phenomenon can be produced on the basis of both a regression and an integration of the personality. For instance, levitation can be produced equally by a magus, by a saint, by a medium, or by an initiate; and obviously in each of these cases the phenomenon acquires a very different meaning.

Aside from the world of mediums, on which we shall not dwell because its regressive character is all too obvious, and aside from cases that I would call "direct intervention" (I am referring to the apparition of certain figures who try to impart this or that "revelation" and to form groups and movements—we know how often that is spoken of, and not always merely as a mystification), there are other cases in which the deviant and suspect character of various occultist currents may be traced, in last analysis, to

some mysterious *contacts*. These contacts, propitiated by certain methods of psychic development, are with forces of which we do not suspect the existence, much less their nature, but which are always on a state of alert in the event that someone lacking the necessary "dignity" and superiority dares to venture into their domain. It is on this basis that a rather worrisome light could be cast on the background of the foundation of several Masonic lodges or Theosophical-occultist groups.[119]

A threat of a more general character, due to the fact that it is connected to modern currents that are less specialized and often portrayed as "currents of thought," consists of a version of pantheism more or less associated with the cult of Life and of the Irrational. It is necessary to take a stand against this view as well, because there are too many people who are inclined to see in pantheism (as opposed to religious and dogmatic theism) a higher form of initiatic knowledge. After all, was there not an attempt to brand Hindu spirituality as a whole as "pantheistic," ignoring everything in it that is the utmost negation of pantheism? (It is enough to recall early Buddhism.) But in this context I will not dwell on this ideological aberration, but rather on the practical consequences stemming from it. As Guénon said, pantheism is present in all those trends that "induce being to 'fuse itself'—and 'confuse itself,' we might add—in a sort of cosmic consciousness that excludes all effective transcendence and spirituality." The various Theosophical theories about "overcoming the illusion of separativeness," the "One Life," and so forth, together with the corresponding corollaries of humanitarianism and egalitarianism, almost always point

119. It may be interesting to report some impressions from a visitor to a certain location in India and the contact he had with a person there: "Who knows what type of forces are at work here? Rishikesh is a hotbed of psychic energies and this man seemed to me a person possessed, although not by God. He gave me the impression that he had sold his soul, and that he had profited from the 'sale,' which is a rare and frightening thing. Whence come ideas? Great inventors and managers of the world are men who build through other people's brains; they have the power of coordinating, of genius, of initiative, as well as a sense of what is required in the material world. Behind them there is always a background of other people more or less known. R. A. K. seemed to me terribly alive, and yet as if he was a vessel of evil, like a vial whose contents could bring about terrible devastations once opened and poured out on the world." (F. Yeats-Brown, *Lancer at Large,* Leipzig, 1937, p. 252)

in this direction, which represents a real "inverted development" or "involution." As Guénon said; traditional teachings know

> *the initiatic symbolism of a "navigation" across the Ocean, representing the psychic domain, which must be crossed while avoiding all its dangers in order to reach the goal; but what is to be said of someone who flings himself into the Ocean and has no aspiration but to drown himself in it? This is very precisely the significance of a so-called "fusion" with a "cosmic consciousness" which is really nothing but the confused and indistinct assemblage of all the psychic influences; and, whatever some people may imagine, these influences have absolutely nothing in common with spiritual influences, even if they may happen to imitate them to a certain extent in some of their outward manifestations. Those who make this fatal mistake either forget about or are unaware of the distinction between the "Upper Waters" and the "Lower Waters"; instead of raising themselves toward the Ocean above, they plunge into the abyss of the Ocean below; instead of concentrating all their powers so as to direct them toward the formless world, which alone can be called "spiritual," they disperse them in the endlessly changeable and fugitive diversity of the forms of subtle manifestation, with no suspicion that they are mistaking for a fullness of "life" something that is in truth the realm of death and of a dissolution without hope of return.*[120]

I suggested at the start that the forces of the counter-initiation "infiltrate" the human forces. What I mean is that there must be certain spiritual or intellectual deviations, which those forces tend to increase by adding to them what in magic is called a "direction of efficacy." This is evident in the case I have just mentioned, since pantheism, vitalism, the theory of the unconscious, and so on are often the mere products of contemporary thought. The proponents of these views are people who do not fully realize the consequences of their ideas, nor the degree to which these views can be utilized by beings who, unlike them, know exactly what they are doing and, so to speak, think for them.

This leads us to a very complex issue, namely that of the nature and

120. Quote from the English translation by Lord Northbourne. Cf. R. Guénon, *The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times*, London, 1953, pp. 289–300. (Editor's note)

origin of the counter-initiation. Up to a point, we can rightly refer to them as *"forces,"* whose malefic action should not be attributed to their intention, but rather to their nature, just as the corrosive influence of an acid does not come from its intention, but rather from its very nature. That which is variously called the "intermediate world," the "infernal region," or the "demonic world" (though not using "demon" in the moral and religious sense of Christianity) may be the origin of such an action, whenever the world of human beings and human thoughts carelessly opens itself up to it. But beyond mere forces, we must also allow for real, intelligent, and personal *beings* as the representatives or agents of the counter-initiation. These beings, like initiates, are connected to a "chain." Guénon talks about a "deviated and perverted initiation," something that has derived from an effective initiation "through a degeneration that has been carried out all the way to the inversion which may be called "*Satanism*." However, Guénon admits that what intervenes at this point is a metaphysical event, since the shift from mere degeneration and involution to the *inversion* and the *intention* that characterize the counter-initiation (aside from the destructive "natural" influences previously described) is not a casual one. In fact, Guénon talks about "a revolt against legitimate authority and the claim for an impossible independence" originating in some initiatic organizations, on the part of people who had previously received its force and who therefore, in virtue of it, find themselves beyond the merely human plane.[121] It may be helpful to trace this back further, to those who, instead of becoming gods, preferred to be the gods' enemies.

This leads me to a last consideration. Evola has brought to light the fact that a natural process leads Western man in the precise direction of the counter-initiation. According to Evola, beginning with the Renaissance, Western man wanted to be "free" and autonomous, cutting off in rapid

121. On another occasion Guénon recognizes these two distinct aspects when he talks about actions similar to those performed by necromancers, who act by supplying their will with the psychic disanimate residues of the dead. In this case the psychic residues would correspond to initiatic organizations that are undergoing an advanced phase of degeneration and have, as it were, outlived themselves; the part of the necromancer is played by the forces of the counter-initiation that impart to these degenerate organisms an inverted direction. We will return to this topic when dealing with the genesis of modern Freemasonry.

succession all the remaining contacts with the higher world and pursuing the path of immanence and the conquest of the physical world. But when the end result is not materialism and a material reality dominated by technology, the individual separated from the spiritual world tends to a sort of asceticism that consists in the overamplification of the dominating will and its freedom, thus forging the myth of the *Superman*. Thus, the individual can only align himself with the line of influence of the counter-initiation, and appearances in this direction (i.e., of unknowing "ascetics of evil") already exist and are very significant. Probably these are the ways with which the destiny of an entire civilization will be sealed.

Coming back to our context, the capital importance of the concept of the counter-initiation will we hope become evident to our readers through these brief considerations. These are not whims, but very serious and real things that must be taken into account for one's own intellectual and spiritual defense when one is committed to our sciences.

[For the subject of this essay, see R. Guénon, *The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times,* trans. Lord Northbourne (London, 1953); *Aperçus sur l'initiation,* (Paris, 1945); J. Evola, *Maschera e volto dello spiritualismo contemporaneo* (2nd ed., Bari, 1949).]

Luce

Opus Magicum:

Perfumes

In the rituals of Magic it is recommended to employ particular fragrances, so that the psychic faculties of the magus may be more easily and quickly elevated and raised to the proper level. This is the general principle; but it may be useful to supply specific instances.

First of all, one should notice the very ancient use of perfumes, which were at first confined to religious ceremonies—e.g., in ancient Egypt, in which their knowledge, as substances and manipulations, was strictly reserved to the priestly caste.

After a few millennia, there is today almost no trace of those particular notions that at one time formed part of the Sacred Science, with the exception of some brief and confused mentions in medieval compilations, and a vague and superficial modern study on the relationship between sex and perfume. I am also obviously excluding the many detailed treatises on the production of perfumes, or on the cultivation of the plants from which they are derived. In such treatises we can find a complete treatment of the subject matter from an industrial and chemical point of view, but absolutely no observations on the physiological and psychological reactions produced by these perfumes; in other words, these treatises lack what is really essential and interesting, namely the knowledge of the empirical reasons for using these perfumes. Physiologists and psychologists have hardly dealt with this aspect in their books, or have allotted only a few pages to it (among those consulted are Luciani, Ellis, Pouillet, Berguet, Krafft, Martineau, Moreau, Penta, Capano, Nuccio, Moll, Tardiff, Charcot, Monin, and Roux). When circumstances allow, I intend to publish an exhaustive study on the subject, from which I have borrowed the pages of this essay: brief, but sufficient for practical use by the intelligent operator.

It is well known, and scientifically established, that every animal or

plant emanates a certain odor, though it is not *normally* perceived by human beings.

Odors, as many experiments have shown, can be perceived only in the gaseous state, determining particular excitations of the olfactory sense, which is closely associated through a particular psychic reaction to the sphere of feelings. These feelings generate reactions both in the motor organs and in the glands of the vegetative and reproductive sphere. (Cf. principally Luciani, *Fisiologia dell'uomo,* vol. IV, ch. 4; A. Dumesil, *Des odeurs, de leur nature et de leur action physiologique.*)

It is also known that olfactory perception, which is localized in the nostrils, takes place through both phases of respiration. This is very important in our study, especially as we recall the instructions by Abraxas and myself.

I will not dwell on the purely physiological observations about the reactions of the odors in the organs of breathing; I will only remind the reader that breathing is the *act* that puts the individual in a *mediated* relationship with the cosmic vital energy.[122] The latter, penetrating the blood through the lungs, is absorbed by the astral body.

The reader should not confuse the latter term with the descriptions of it found in Theosophical literature and the like.

I rather mean, with Paracelsus, the *aereal body,* which is the substance of life and of actions; this body can be known by the Initiate only through practice, and not through literature or discussions.

In the operations of Theurgy and Magic, the astral *faculties* are excited with every possible means: directly, through the will, and indirectly, through perfumes and ceremonial forms.

Those who have practiced breathing techniques know the particular subtle reaction that they produce. Through the use of perfumes, this reaction is determined by an order of vibrations that suit the purpose of the operator.

Perfumes are employed by following the law of astral *correspondences (signaturae rerum)* during each planet's days and hours (for these, see Peter of Abano's *Heptameron*). Let us remember that, in general, they participate with the nature of the element *water* (see Agrippa, *De Occulta*

122. The term *"mediated"* refers to the act of breathing. As it is usually performed, it has an element of *impurity,* in that the individual essence is not in direct contact with the cosmic life, as happens in further stages (to be described later) when *astral breathing* is practiced.

Philosophia, I, 7) and thus they are useful solvents of the element *earth* and coagulators of the element *air*—since water is the *mean* between them.

Natural perfumes, which are the only ones employed in our operations, are divided into two categories: animal and vegetal. The former are supplied by blood, sperm, milk, hair, bones, and by other animal sources. The latter are supplied by woods, leaves, fruits, roots, flowers, resins, and by everything else that has a vegetal origin.

I will supply a list, noting their planetary correspondence. In the cases of animals we mean their parts, referring also to their special signatures.

Sun ☉

Laurel, Aloe, Amber, Balsam, Benzoin, Calamus, Cinnamon, Cedar, Celandine, Ivy, Heliotrope, Ash, Carnation, Gentian, Hyacinth, Juniper, Sunflower, Incense, Iris, Lavender, Lotus, Marjoram, Mastic, Mint, Myrrh, Musk, Peony, Pepper, Vervain, Vine, Saffron—Eagle, Cantharides, Heart, Brain, Marrow, Blood, Scarab.

Moon ☽

Camphor, Incense, Hyssop, Magnetite, Myrtle, Poppy—Duck, Eagle, Brain, Excrements, Cat, Menstrual Blood, Marrow, Juices, Sweat, Blood.

MERCURY ☿

Acacia, Cinnamon, Cassia, Carnation, Incense, Marjoram, Mastic, Pimpernel, Parsley—Eagle, Ibis, Blood.

MARS ♂

Garlic, Asparagus, Balsam, Bdellium, Thistle, Cypress, Hellebore, Spurge, Magnetite, Nettle, Plantain, Mustard, Sulfur—Eagle, Owl, Bile, Genitals, Blood.

VENUS ♀

Aloe, Amber, Orange, Maidenhair Fern, Coriander, Laudanum, Myrtle, Musk, Rose, Sandalwood, Thyme, Valerian, Verbain, Violet—Eagle, Cat, Blood, Testicles.

JUPITER ♃

Holly, Aloe, Benzoin, Beech, Ash, Carnation, Hyacinth, Henbane, Iris, Almond, Manna, Mastic, Mint, Nutmeg, Peony, Pine, Oak, Rhubarb, Storax, Plum, Vine, Violet, Sugar—Lamb, Eagle, Horsetail, Blood.

SATURN ♄

Aconite, Asphodel, Benzoin, Hemlock, Cypress, Coriander, Costus, Hellebore, Henbane, Mandrake, Myrrh, Poppy, Pine, Resin, Radish, Rue, Celery, Snakeroot—Eagle, Owl, Cat, Hair, Blood.

The following is a brief list of the most used fragrances arranged according to the planets and the days corresponding to them:

SUNDAY	☉	Saffron, Balsam, Incense
MONDAY	☽	Poppy, Camphor, Myrrh
TUESDAY	♂	Spurge, Hellebore
WEDNESDAY	☿	Mastic, Carnation
THURSDAY	♃	Ash, Storax, Benzoin
FRIDAY	♀	Musk, Amber, Aloe
SATURDAY	♄	Poppy, Mandrake, Magnetite

And according to the constellations and the months:

APRIL	♈	Costus
MAY	♉	Mastic
JUNE	♊	Camphor
JULY	♋	Incense
AUGUST	♌	Sandalwood
SEPTEMBER	♍	Magnetite
OCTOBER	♎	Opopanax
NOVEMBER	♏	Aloe
DECEMBER	♐	Agrimony

JANUARY	♑	Spurge
FEBRUARY	♒	Thyme
MARCH	♓	Myrrh

Keep in mind that, generally speaking, every type of gum is under the signature of the Sun; the leaves, the Moon; the woods, Mars; the barks, Mercury; the fruits, Jupiter; the flowers, Venus; and the roots, Saturn.

I will remind the readers that in the harmony of operations, the perfumes correspond also to colors and sounds. Some instruments have recently been invented whose keyboards do not correspond to notes, but to bright flashes, or splashes of perfumes. Bacon, and more recently, G. B. Allen and H. Field, have tried to establish a *musical* scale of colors and odors. For the latter, it is interesting to see the "gamma di Pierre" reported by Hubert (*Plantes à parfums,* Paris: Donud & Pinat, 1505).

The processes of extraction of odorous substances are usually: desiccation, pulverization, solutions, distillations, tinctures, alcoholates, essential oils, oils for infusions, and ointments. I have mentioned some of these procedures in reference to magical herbs (*Ignis,* 1925, p. 336).

While common perfumes are produced by one or more of the above-mentioned means, for the purposes of Magic the substances are directly placed on a brazier, where the heat of the burning coals causes their odoriferous principles to volatilize.

Remember that, except in particular cases, the matter being placed on the brazier *must not burn.*

The smokes that arise are not to be *sniffed* through either a rapid or a slow inspiration and expiration, as we do with perfumes; rather, they need to be breathed in long and deeply, the breath held for a short time, and then exhaled *firmly and slowly.* Thus the fluidic body may act upon them *vampirically,* absorbing their vital essence and placing itself on the particular *harmonic plane.*

I could write at length about the "vampiric" power of the astral body; it is enough to mention that the essential characteristic of this power is *to*

inhale the vital fluid in order to transmit it to the organism and to *feed it.*

What I have said here is enough to suggest an experiment: to inhale the perfume of unpicked flowers until one can even *replace, up to a point, the usual food.*

Remember not to attempt this experiment with animal odors—and especially with human ones (genital, armpit, and sweat in general)—*and not to use them in magical operations without the specific instructions of somebody who is qualified.* For a sufficient knowledge of what I mean, try observing the reactions that take place when you *isolate yourself* after inhaling three or four times with your face close to a towel used by another person (especially of the opposite sex), and afterward concentrate yourself in rhythmic breathing and in *silence. I must warn you that all these last forms of vampirism are extremely dangerous and harmful for those who operate or for those with whom they come into contact.*[123]

Among the most frequently employed fragrances are incense and myrrh, both with a generic solar attribute. They can be used under any sign, but then they act on different planes, with reactions that, though not antagonistic, are not able to complete each other for a perfect union in the total result.

Incense is the magical fragrance par excellence, since it has a power of fluidic *condensation* greater than any other. For this reason it is not suitable to use it in operations that do not have an absolutely determined purpose aimed at producing apparitions, or the like. Myrrh is useful in those operations the objective of which is contact with the natural forces.

Eucalyptus will be used in all the theurgical operations and in those that establish relationships between intelligences.

We know that we are the first to employ and to introduce this plant in the use of magical operations. Eucalyptus, known since 1790, was introduced first in England; from there it went to France, eventually reaching the entire continent at the recent date of 1856, thanks to Ramel.

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123. They are dangerous for him who operates, in the form of astral infections, poisonings, and even possessions. However, those who remain alert and active, by psychically breathing in the odor of a nearby person, may place themselves on their "ascendant" and thus more easily submit it to their own occult influence. (Note by UR)

Eucalyptus belongs to the family of *Mirtaceae,* which is a group of the leptosperm plants. It originated in Australia and in the islands of the Indian archipelago; it comprises about 150 species. From the distillation of its leaves and wood it is possible to obtain a fragrant oil (*eucalyptol:* $C_{24}H_{20}O_2$), which is similar to camphor. This oil does not dissolve easily in water, but dissolves well in alcohol and in ether, which, variously processed, is used in the pharmaceutical, perfume, and liquor industries.

The fruit, which we also use, is marked by a solar character, and it contains, in a wonderful synthesis, even the characters of the elements. Heat melts and evaporates the essence with which the fruit is saturated. It reacts harmonically on different zones, with particular emphasis on the higher faculties.

Eucalyptus may be used as a universal fragrance, because it is the only one that possesses all the elementary characters. When combined with a touch of incense and myrrh, it is the most useful in magical operations.

IX

Arvo

Conscious Thought-Relaxation-Silence

The familiarity that those who write in a serious manner about esotericism have with particular states and qualities of the spirit often causes them to abbreviate what they have to say. I do not intend to underrate my readers, but since this publication is accessible to everyone, and considering that we started off with the intention not to omit anything for the sake of clarity, it would not be a bad idea to return to some issues of *intonation*. The following simple remarks that I am going to make are meant as a contribution toward developing *practice;* besides, they are not even my own.[124]

Quite often, overlooked details are the cause of failure. Moreover, an erroneous attitude that is not corrected in the beginning may negatively affect the entire development process.

THOUGHT THAT IS POWER—How are we to understand ⊙, namely thought that is power?

1) First and foremost as *conscious thought* or as *living awareness of thought.* The first thing to understand is that we usually do not have a true *awareness* of thought: we think, have thoughts, and that is all. Thus we first need to realize CONSCIOUS THOUGHT.

In a calm moment, fix your attention in this knowledge:

I THINK!

Realize that thought manifests the same power as BEING. By thinking, you *are.* That which keeps you standing and without which you would collapse as an incoherent bundle of inanimate things is *thought.* You are at

124. Some of the suggestions I set forth can be found in the German "Neugeist" movement. Cf., e.g., K. O. Schmidt, *Selbst-und Lebensbemeisterung durch Gedankenkraft,* and *Wie konzentriere ich mich?* (Baum Verlag, Pfullingen)

the center of this *force* and of this *unity,* when you let the magical formula echo in you, as you are fully awake:

I THINK! I AM!

2) Conscious thought . . . But this is already a second stage, since you feel that thought is a FORCE. Concentrate in your thought with this awareness: "In me there is a force that is power and command." You will have the sense of that which is *intellectual power.* Here lies the principle of magical force, rather than in ordinary "will." Thought, integrated into the awareness that it is *I* who thinks, reveals a superior form of *action:* it is a source of evidence and certainty that is transformed into the sense that I *can* act, and eventually into a direct realizing force.

3) This thought animated by an inner force is *right* thought. As you concentrate, reflect on that which is *false* thought: it is sophistic, destructive, nervous, uncertain, restless, external; it is thinking with no continuity, halfhearted, distracted, that shifts from one thought to the next, from sensation to sensation. Oppose to it the new sense of *positive* thought, of thought fulfilled, of thinking that is wholesome and *straight,* a thinking with resolution, with clear goals, without hesitation or uncertainty. When you act, the formulas must be positive, calm, rhythmical, precise, well balanced throughout, and *conscious.*

4) Thought must seek unity and shun multiplicity. Thinking is realized as power when *only one* thought dominates the mind and directs it unfailingly and flexibly toward *only one* purpose, which is located at the center of the entire being, as if it were the *only* existing thing in the world. Then thought becomes *plastic* and creative. To know very well what one wants, to fix and will its plastic image without interruption, flexibly, in *unison with the entire body,* is to gather a system of occult forces into a power of realization.

5) This concentration must be *active* to the highest degree. Every fear, worry, hope, desire, and hatred leads to a concentration, but a *negative* one. Instead, you must *start* from a state of mental *equilibrium,* and, as you proceed, you must *nourish,* nurture, saturate your thought through intensification and a special exaltation. You must animate your thought until you get to the point where you can feel: I CAN. In regard to this, Eliphas Levi says that he who knows the two *opposite* currents of the "Great Magical

Agent" or "Astral Light," and also knows the art of their *equilibrium,* possesses the key to power. This is very true.

6) Finally, thought that is power is the thought of a *free mind;* it is the thought that has a *solar* character—and indeed it is the thought that is also fire of *love.* As long as you are preoccupied only with your own person and your "Self," with all its immediate interests and passions; as long as you experience other beings and things as an external and foreign reality and are enslaved, when confronting them, to instinctive reactions—until then, *you are not free* and the power of your mind remains limited just as your body is limited in space. Conversely, *solarity* is radiating virtue; freedom is being open, knowing how to recover in one's self and to emanate a current of life that makes one *feel* other beings, in *sympathy* even when they oppose one and hate one. It is at that point that limits are pushed back. From an occult perspective, *you first need to love those whom you will strike, even when you aim to kill them.* But when the opening of your mind acquires the meaning of *giving,* of recovering and transmitting your strength and your fire in order to lift upward and lead forward—then you will experience a mysterious flow of energies that give life, as well as light and incomparable certainty, to the acting thought. This is the highest degree of *right* thought, or ⊙.

Follow my advice: for an entire *week,* in the calm of the evening, fully realize that which is the first quality of creating thought, namely conscious thought. Imagine in a living way all that I have told you about it. Practice until you have completely understood all that this word encompasses. Then take a second week and do the same concerning the second point, namely *thought as force.* Then do the same for the rest. Believe that if you will do all this with a serious and right effort, these few weeks can really lead you to an *awakening.* You will already possess the beginning of the right direction.

The alchemists used to say that one should not look for "matter" too far away, for it is not rare, but within everybody's reach, and is employed for vulgar uses. One of the lasting meanings of this expression is that magical power is not to be found God knows where or only by a few people who know awesome secrets. Rather, it is asleep in the ordinary thought of people. In order to awaken it, it is sufficient to *become aware of it,* namely to *awaken,* by transforming one's attitude, which consists of inertia and absence, toward thought.

RELAXATION—Abraxas has called attention to the fact that in magical operations everything that is effort, resistance, or reaction on the part of the body must be excluded. This means that one needs to learn first of all the faculty of *relaxation (détente, Entspannung),* which is not achieved through violence, but in a calm and rhythmic way, through conscious command of *thought.*

In order to attain a complete relaxation, you need to proceed step-by-step—beginning by focusing your attention on a finger and imagining it to be lifeless, abandoned, dead, and then to shift to the other fingers, to the hand, to the forearm, and then to the whole arm. Realize this formula:

"I am taking away all the strength from the muscles of my arm. The muscles are totally asleep. They are relaxed. I do not feel my arm: it is asleep, it is completely asleep and relaxed. It is a mass of lifeless bronze."

In the same way, mentally travel through the various parts of your legs, progressively from below, using the same self-suggestion, employing the same mental command: *feel* the way all the tension melts away, as *if it were snow placed on a burning stove.* Finally, regard the entire body with this *conscious* thought:

"All my muscles are relaxed. They are totally relaxed. I feel—I AM relaxed. I am calm. I am relaxed."

And then:

"I am absolutely calm. Everything in me is relaxed, untied. I am calm, calm, I am rhythmical proportion, cosmic harmony . . ."

Continue to practice these exercises with goodwill until you can implement them in a few seconds. Do them *self-consciously* and with zeal. Soon, it will be possible to completely relax your body at will, through the mere mental command, or through the mere evocation of a plastic mental image.

SILENCE—After physical relaxation comes inner relaxation, or *Silence.* Bodily sensations have disappeared, thoughts become less frequent and slower, while you remain without being impatient, dwelling in a conscious calm. Realize this formula:

"The external world has disappeared. I am alone—deep within myself . . . I remain silent. I am calm. I think and feel that I am complete calm. I am calm and everything in me is calm. Everything in me is calm and infinite peace.

I—am—free——calm . . ."

After that, think of nothing else. Remain in this state. Allow the occasional *plastic, living image* to flash through your mind.

Calm—as in a distant, deep, abandoned grave.

Calm—as at the bottom of a clear, transparent alpine lake.

Calm—as a night filled with stars.

Calm—as a small town under the blazing summer sun, *deserted,* calm, noiseless, completely spread out, waiting for the cool of the night.

In fact, you are here waiting for the night in which the *spiritual sun* rises and in which occurs the miracle of *interiority,* the birth of the *spiritual man.*

In this calm, the mind is dissolved. And the thought that is evoked there and prepared according to the Hermetic art—is *magic.*

Ea

Considerations on Magic and Its Powers

Considering the frequent use in these essays of the term "magic," we need to specify what it essentially means to us, and to defend the legitimacy we attribute to it.

Aside from modern caricatures of magical disciplines that, especially among Anglo-Saxons, are confused with methods aimed at "becoming strong," at acquiring "personal magnetism," or at achieving "success in life," etc., in the ancient and traditional world the term "magic" likewise often did not refer to a very high spiritual level. It could indicate a body of techniques aimed at using forces that were not merely physical, but which also did not necessarily have a spiritual character, any more than the use, in their own field, of the forces and powers proper to modern technology. In some instances, magic was a profession of sorts, and operations of this cheap kind of magic could even be performed on behalf of other people.

However, it would be arbitrary to limit all magic to this inferior level. Let us say that those who, coming from different points of view, try to limit the term "magic" to this meaning demonstrate a partial and shortsighted mentality that is real, even if they do not realize it.

Even in matters of mere technology, it is not necessary to make this restricted use of the term "magic." We may recall that the representatives of the ancient Mazdean (Persian) cult of the God of Light were called "Magi," and were not devoted to magic in the limited and common sense of the word; on the contrary, it seems that the term derives from an ancient Aryan-Iranian root, found, for instance, in the German verb *mögen* meaning *power* in the wider sense of the word. After all, in the very tradition (i.e., Christianity) that constantly attributed to the term "magic" every possible dark meaning of "accursed science," there was no problem in retaining the word "magi" for the three mysterious personages who greeted the birth of Jesus.

As every practitioner of esoteric disciplines knows, these characters are not figures found in fairy tales, but rather the representatives of well-defined initiatic dignities. Even during the Middle Ages, the term "magic" did not have the restrictive sense I have mentioned. If anything, this term could be applied to what, at the time, was called "natural magic," in contrast to which Agrippa—to cite him alone—conceived a heavenly magic and a divine magic as disciplines that had very different goals and dignities. A very interesting testimony on the matter that we need to recall is the use that the Italian Hermetic scholar Cesare della Riviera made of the terms "magic" and "magical" in his work *Il mondo magico de gli eroi* (The Magical World of the Heroes), which was first published at the beginning of the seventeenth century. In this text, magic is conceived as synonymous with the art of those who know how to reopen the path leading to the earthly paradise, in order to partake of the "Tree of Life" found at its center. This obviously refers to the restoration of that primordial state, reintegration of power, and contact with the "center" which constitute the main goal of initiation as such. An interesting detail (the reason that it is interesting will be explained further on) is that according to della Riviera, the "magical world" was one and the same as the "world of heroes," and those who pursue the magical path are called by him "regal *disciples* of high Jupiter."

All this shows that it is permissable to use the term "magic" without confusing it with the empirical practice of psychic powers, referring high magic instead to a particular way of understanding the same initiatic science. We may even admit that this meaning comes closer to the ancient term *theurgy*. But in this case we need to make some reservations, since, literally speaking, a "theurgist" means both "maker of divine works" as well as "maker of gods." In the latter case, the theurgical art is the art of turning certain powers that are awakened or evoked from above into apparitions; in this case, theurgy would be something that falls more or less within the realm of what used to be called "ceremonial magic." Ceremonial magic, as far the spiritual level is concerned, ranks lower than high magic, which is the subject of this essay.

There is a twofold reason that we want to retain the term "magic."

First of all, we want to emphasize the character of an experimental science and technique that is essential to the initiatic path in general and which distinguishes magic from everything that is mysticism, mediumism,

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First of all, we want to emphasize the character of an experimental science and technique that is essential to the initiatic path in general and which distinguishes magic from everything that is mysticism, mediumism,

and the like. In passing, we may note that in the body of positive religions the magical component is present in everything that is *ritual* with a definite and objective character, as opposed to the purely subjective and psychological domain of faith, sentiments, and states of mind.

The second reason is that despite all its counterfeits and fairy-tale adaptations, the figure of the magus retains in a highly visible way the ideal of *spiritual virility,* which is most essential for the higher type of the initiate or adept. The magus has always called to mind the ideal of a *dominating superiority.*

With this I want to point to an order of ideas that is very important for us, because it defines the tradition to which we are connecting ourselves. However, it is necessary to start a little further back. It is fairly easy to recognize in the body of ancient civilizations the presence of two sufficiently distinct traditions that may be defined as the *regal tradition* and the *priestly tradition.* In the beginning, these two traditions were one and the same: a differentiation occurred at a later time, and it should be understood as being between two different ways of embodying the primordial spirituality and perpetuating what is called the *primordial tradition.* On this basis, several interferences and reciprocal integrations of the regal tradition with the priestly tradition have been possible. However, if we see in the priest one who simply mediates the relationship between the human and the divine worlds, and if in the king (according to his original dignity) we recognize one who is instead a directly divine being, so that he represents with his mere presence a mediating function—then we must recognize that the regal tradition is much closer than the priestly tradition to the primordial tradition, and consequently to the supreme ideal of adeptship. This priority can hardly be contested if we have in mind what the traditional royalty represented, for instance, in ancient Egypt, Iran, China, Peru, Japan, and even in ancient Rome. In reference to Rome, it will be helpful to remember that the title *pontifex maximus* was a regal title, a title of the *augustus* or Roman Emperor (as it had been at the origins of Rome). By borrowing it and applying it to the leader of a merely priestly hierarchy, Catholicism was guilty of little less than an usurpation. Now, if the magical dignity, as we have said, leads one to think spontaneously of a spiritual virility and a dominating superiority, then the relationship that it has with the tradition of initiatic regality becomes evident, as does the

converse: that it is this very tradition that legitimates it and confers on it the fullness of its meaning vis-à-vis the limitations proper to every spirituality of a priestly type. It is irrelevant that the tradition of initiatic regality has long disappeared as a source of adepts such as visible heads of peoples and states: the *secret* tradition of initiatic regality has existed and continues to exist in its proper place, alongside the tradition of initiation in general. It is no coincidence that Hermeticism speaks of a "Royal Art" and of a *rex physicorum* (king of physical things); that the Rosicrucians referred to an *imperator* (emperor); and that even in the degenerate residues and counterfeits of modern Freemasonry there are dignities that are connected to the ideal of the "Holy Empire."

But there are other aspects to this matter. One concerns the qualifications: these are not the same for the royal and priestly dignities. In the former, what matters the most is a spiritual race of *warriors* and *heroes*. There is a very significant tradition present that fits perfectly in the order of ideas explained here. Hesiod relates the traditional teaching concerning the four ages that correspond to the various phases of involution and descent of the most recent cycle of humanity. It was no coincidence that Hesiod defined as a generation of *heroes* the one to which Jupiter/Zeus gave the opportunity of participating anew in the primordial state, despite the approach of the last age, or the "Age of Iron"; this participation corresponds to initiatic reintegration. Thus the reader can understand why della Riviera spoke of "heroes," of "*regal* disciples of high Jupiter" (Jupiter was always considered as the god of kings), and of a "magical world of heroes," and also why we have thought it important to draw attention to this testimony, which, after all, is not isolated and which supports the traditional and orthodox character of such an order of ideas.

There is another aspect that is also important and needs to be examined. The upper limit (if we can call it this) of the priestly tradition is an asceticism of pure contemplation and an orientation of the spirit that gives special emphasis to the sphere of knowledge, instead of the sphere of action. Naturally, when rising toward the higher regions of the spirit, the differences become less pronounced. Wherever one talks about knowledge (as long as there is any reference to the initiatic order) one also means realization, just as the term *theoria,* according to its original Greek meaning, often translated as "contemplation," implies, unlike the meanings that

became dominant later on, something active, namely the act of pure thought. This does not prevent a residue of difference, at least in matters of emphasis: those who insist too much on the path of knowledge and claim primacy for it are bound to feel the same diffidence toward the magical path and the same *animus* that the priest had toward the royal adept.

On a lower plane, the most typical instance of this *animus* is found in Christianity. Christianity has the character of one of the most unilateral priestly traditions that have ever developed, to the point of becoming a mere religion devoid of every esoteric dimension. Thus the attitude of Christianity against everything that resembles "magic" has always been symptomatic; Christianity did not hesitate to associate with "magic" and "diabolical arts" everything that, in general, pertains to the world of initiation. But even on a higher plane, there are those who, while fully recognizing the dignity and meaning of the initiatic path through understanding it unilaterally in terms of "knowledge," are more or less inclined to discredit the notion of magic, confining it to the context of a questionable science of manipulation of subtle powers. However, what we have expounded so far shows that this restriction is arbitrary, and points out the influence responsible for this bias. At the same time, we have confirmed the legitimacy of making magic a synonym of the *ars regia* and the initiatic science of the Self.

Following these considerations of a theoretical character, I wish to emphasize some points related to the magical domain and the initiatic concept of powers.

1) According to an initiatic axiom, *"You must not seek power; it is power that must seek you."* In our tradition, power is *feminine* and seeks a center: he who knows how to give a center to this power through his own *renunciation* (hoping our use of the word will be understood) and *hardness* created by domination of his soul, by isolation and resistance—power is unfailingly attracted to such a person and obeys him as her own *male*. Just as water naturally forms a vortex around a pillar standing steadfast in its current, likewise, in a spontaneous way, an aura forms around him who, like a force that presses on and does not stop at anything, appropriates the way of *being*. *Being* is the condition of power; an impassibility (we could

even say a frigidity) that does not look at it, is what attracts it. Power eludes *desire* for power, like a woman shunning the lustful embrace of an impotent lover.

2) Those who understand this also understand the nature of the continuous dangers connected to the powers. Every power is for the Self like a vertigo of subtle energy that is fixed and chained by its "central" quality. If one's inner resolution fails even for an instant (namely the *being* due to which a power is attracted by the initiate and subjected to him), this power will overwhelm one and cut one down. In such cases the consequence is usually a regression to a state that is even lower than the one from which he started. The powers are transformed into beings that *possess* him who has fallen.

3) Sometimes mention is made of a "rejection of powers." This is nonsense, just like that "renunciation of *nirvana*" spoken of in some Theosophical milieus. *Nirvana* is not like a dwelling place where one can enter or exit at will. *Nirvana* is a *state of being;* once it is realized, one cannot "give it up" for the simple fact that it constitutes, once and for all, an integral part of the being. Likewise, it is possible to talk about a renunciation of the *use* of powers, which is the same thing as having power resting in the state of simple possibility; however, talk of a *rejection* of powers is nonsense, because they are connected in a natural way to the metaphysical dignity of the initiate, and are in a certain way its chrism. Powers could be rejected only if one could renounce that dignity; this, however, is impossible for the same reason as given in regard to *nirvana.*

At any rate, it is certain that powers, far from being the pleasant and desirable things that a profane person imagines them to be, are such that one who has them without having requested them would gladly and freely get rid of them if only one could. This can be felt in an analogous way by thinking of dignities and leadership positions in human society, which imply not only risks, but also a high degree of burdens and responsibilities: responsibility, first of all, toward oneself.

4) The attraction that the notion of magical powers exercises on the common mind is based on a gross misunderstanding. What is conceived is an ordinary person with his various desires, goals, passions, and interests, then he is imagined to be invested with powers. However, nothing is further from the truth. The subject invested with powers, or the magus, is a

being who is substantially different from an ordinary person and has nothing in common with him; it is a real change of state that has endowed the magus with powers. (This is true at least for the domain of high magic; things may go otherwise in the magic that, without moralizing, we call "black magic," which is more or less the same as witchcraft.) What happens is that most of what an ordinary person would want to do and achieve through "powers" ceases almost entirely to be of interest to those who have achieved the state that introduces them to the real possession of those powers. This is truer the more one ascends (or gains depth, which is another phrase for the same thing), and is the reason that those who can do the most show it the least.

5) Among many people one finds a fairly childish view of magical action, almost like that of a fact determined without a causal connection—more or less as with the magic wands of fairy tales, which *ipso facto* automatically produce this or that effect. Even if one does not refer to magic wands but to mysterious formulas or secret signs that allegedly have an analogous power, the intellectual horizon remains unchanged. In passing, I note that for a similar example, one should turn not to the world of magic, but rather to modern technology. The power to blow up a rock by pushing a button, or even lighting a fire by striking a match, belongs to this type: I am here, an effect is produced there, automatically, "magically," by a power that is not mine, that is unintelligible and extraneous to me even though I may know well its modalities or its *habits*. Moreover, such magical technology allows for possibilities that high magic prefers to exclude, for reasons shown in the previous paragraph: one can make an indifferent use of it for any desire or purpose of any human individual.

On the contrary, the true magical act, from the point of view of inner experience, is exactly the opposite of the miracle, in its supposed sense as an incomprehensible and wonderful phenomenon. The magical act emanates from a state of absolute *evidence-knowledge;* the meaning of a direct, real causality, or of the *power* that immediately produces an effect, is inseparable from it. This effect is realized in function of its causes, and the cause is one and the same with the *state* of an integrated life and its achievements. The reader may recall that we have already dealt with this when talking about the initiatic view of knowledge.

We need only to add that formulas, rituals, and signs that originally were only used as references and auxiliary tools for actions that had such and such a meaning due to a process of degeneration may have been passed on through the ages without being understood. This does not mean that, thanks to all the subtle factors connected with it and to a power of indirect reactions on the operator (which is what is really going on when one thinks that everything is reduced to the power of autosuggestion and to the means of creating it), the use of those inherited magical instruments may continue, in given circumstances, to produce the same effects. These effects, then, may be regarded as "magical" in the bad and miraculous sense of the word, precisely because in such cases the causal process for the most part eludes clear consciousness.

6) The point we have discussed leads us back to operations that are an exercise of powers and do not have an exclusively initiatic goal. We must admit that several instructions of magic transmitted in these pages refer (at least potentially) to this plane. Is it possible to follow the right path and yet give oneself over to such operations? What has been said in point 4 still retains its validity. However, it is possible to conceive an intermediate phase in which the magical experience can have the meaning and value of some kind of *sport,* not in a derogatory sense, but as a training of forces and organs that do not belong to the physical and bodily plane and that are important for those who are beginning to lead a double life in the visible and in the invisible. We must also add that just as a healthy sport fosters the qualities of discipline, courage, perseverance, and lucid control over the situation, analogous developments (naturally of a higher quality and at a higher level) have come from the actions and experiences mentioned above, which cannot but be very helpful for initiatic realizations in the proper sense. One needs only to recognize the limit beyond which, just as in the case of physical sport, there no longer is a development, but a deviation, since one may end up attributing value to contingent things.

We finally need to ask this last question. Is it conceivable to use power when it is neither conceived in the absurd terms mentioned in point 4 (namely for the personal satisfaction of human passions and desires), nor has the very contingent and subordinate goal just mentioned? We may answer in the affirmative. In the first place, on the initiatic path and on a

transcendent plane in general, since there are specific traditions in which the capacity *to act* constitutes a trial, overcoming which leads from the "passive identity" typical of a cosmic-ecstatic beatitude to the "active identity" that is the true initiatic and "regal" realization of the Supreme Principle. This trial is mentioned in some esoteric Islamic teachings, and in the Hindu tradition the god Krishna says in the *Bhagavad Gita* (IV, 6; IX, 8): "In me all the universes are already fulfilled; yet, by dominating my nature, I manifest myself among beings and I act."[125]

The last possibility to be considered is that of actions performed not on the way to fulfillment (which, after all, includes the very possibility just mentioned, though it represents the ultimate stage) but by an adept who has already completed this path. However, we can say very little about these possible actions, since they elude human measures and motives. What is certain is that at their base there cannot be particular passions or goals; not even notions of "good" and "evil" may inform them, since such notions and their opposition belong equally to the human sphere. That which has the quality of a *center* and "invariable middle" is equally distant from both, from "good" and "evil," and this same nature must inform the impersonal actions of those who have realized the connection of their essence with the "Center."

125. This is the true meaning of what, in the domain of serious doctrine, may correspond to the above-mentioned "renunciation of *nirvana*."

Abraxas

Magic of the Image

In a being who has become *alive,* the mind is no longer "thought." Rather, it is activity that instantaneously *determines* reality through *images.* Through images the magus creates, destroys, and transforms into matter feelings and sensations that are within himself; through images he acts on his own organism; through images he operates on other people. To the material actions and "will" of ordinary people he substitutes the power of the image.

But in order to do so, it is necessary to awaken oneself to *timeless speed* in feeling, conceiving, halting, and intervening. The ordinary, slow, obtuse, and sluggish consciousness usually manages to perceive things at the speed of a sleepwalker. *Acts* escape it; consciousness opens its eyes only when the "precipitate," the "fallout," of the *fact* (the thing, the sensation, the material movement) is already there. Thus, what consciousness perceives are the shadows of phenomena and a world of knowledge as acknowledgment, but not of *action* (magic).

In this sense you also understand the world you call "inner" as being of external phenomena and lunar; thus, you do not know and live the *image* as action, but as image. Its action is too fast, and you are not present in it. A mere echo, the image either "appears" by itself, or it may be simply "evoked." You do not know the *creative* relationship through which it could act from deep inside yourself (Latin *imago* ["image"] = *imo ago* ["I act from the depth"]).

In order to acquire and perceive this rapidity of what is not yet "physical," the mind must succeed in wresting itself free from the organ of the brain. The necessary condition for this is to "descend into hell"—that is, from the head into the "heart," as we have mentioned before. This is also the "bath" that breaks the chains of "gold" and frees it, drawing out of it the *"winged"* hermetic-alchemical symbol of *rapidity* that corresponds to the *antelope,* which in Hindu esotericism refers to the subtle "center" of the heart.

You already know that this "descent" leads to the perception of the "subtle" and the "volatile." But the "subtle" is the *second dimension* of reality—in which reality is no longer exteriority in space and time, or discursive thought, but rather activity and rhythm. Then you are "reborn backwards." No longer hypnotized by the *spectacle* of things and ideas, you can detach yourself from them and perceive them in the act of their prenatural birth.

However, this is a consciousness in which the *image* is transformed into a projection, or into an action in the pure state. Will is effort: desire is the tendency toward something that one does not have; the force is a middle point between a goal and a reality into which it tries to be transformed by overcoming a resistance. In the magical image, on the other hand, there is no effort, nor striving, nor an interval of fulfillment: it is acting that amounts to seeing, and a seeing that amounts to acting. The process of ideation is realization *ipso facto*. It does not have a future, and it is more rapid than the antithesis: its law is IT IS—the command-presence.

Through images you can successfully stand up to feelings and passions, whenever they descend upon you, a struggling ascetic. If desire, fear, anger, sensations, hatred, lust, all of a sudden appeared in your mind, in your feeling and will, jump back and *fix* the feeling in an image: act upon it and the mental act will produce transformation and annihilation in the corresponding element. We read for instance in the *Majjhima-nikâjo,* XX, the simile of:

> *"a young man who all of a sudden realized he had the rotting corpse of a serpent, or a dog, or another human being wrapped around his neck, being scared and overwhelmed with disgust, he would rip it off and throw it away."*

The feeling needs to be quickly associated with the image of a corpse, while the mind realizes the horror of the situation and the gesture of ripping it off and throwing it away. The mental act, when it is strengthened in a material action, generates ritual and symbolic practice. I will discuss this later, though you may already perceive the meaning of it. In some mountains of northern Africa, for instance, there are found little mounds of stones,

which are considered to be saturated with an evil power. They have been created by a materialization of the mental act, with which, by fixing the effort of the ascent in the image of a stone, this very stone is hurled away. Assume in a flexible way any thought or image of negation, mistrust, distraction, or that you simply do not wish to entertain; immediately imagine a hand pulling out a splinter that has pierced the skin and casting it away. And if the element has already penetrated and sapped your strength, get rid of it *"as a strong man, seizing a weaker man by the head or by the shoulders, compels him, crushes him, throws him down."* If a pain, an illness, or a sense of fatigue overtakes you, fix it in a flake of snow that melts when it falls on a mass of glowing white-hot metal. If any anxiety, restlessness, desire, or mental fever attack you, turn them into the shadow of smoke that, in the fire of the mind, is dispersed in the pure, clean, blue sky. The mind is fixed through the image of a fist that holds a little defenseless animal, until it stays still, motionless, inert; or through the image of an arrow shot at its target; or that of an ever-present iron bar that always parries every blow; or a hand that systematically grabs and leads the unstable mind, which runs away every time an involuntary association of thoughts arises, back to its proper place (at the center).

In order to free the mind, imagine the open sky, the air, or remember that *"[l]ike a deep, clear, and transparent lake, this is how the wise become calm"* (*Dhammapada,* VI, 82); or that *"[a]ll desires flow into him as waters flow into the ocean, which, ever-filled, never overflows but remains unchanged"* (*Bhagavad Gita,* II, 70); or *"Like a lamp that shines unmoving in a windless place"* (VI, 19). This last image can be represented through *determination* by imagining a flame that is still enveloped in smoke and mobile, in which a state upset by modifications that have not yet been dominated is eventually fixed.

About all this, be aware that first of all it is necessary to stop a thought or a feeling as soon as it emerges. It must be caught in midair, before it puts down roots in your soul and spreads there: you must prevent it, suffocate it while it is still in embryo. Become agile, elusive, ready to detach and extract yourself.

Second, notice how well practice leads you back to the preparation of the Caduceus: the emotional state acts like a fluid mercury ☿ that is *fixed* in the image, which is then ignified by the mental act ☉; in other words,

everything depends on the rapid and complete amalgamation of sentiment and image, and on the *active* attitude to be maintained before the image. The entire mind must be concentrated on this image, as a bundle of solar rays is gathered up in the focus of a lens.

In theurgical invocations, all the various images that express the attributes referring to entities or deities must be actualized in the fluid sense of one's entire being. The mind will shift from one to the next, performing a series of transformations that serve to produce the necessary exaltation, so that sympathy and communication may be established.

A general image of great power is that of a dark body that is consumed and falls down, surrendering its place to a body made of radiant light and glorious strength. This image actually flashes at all moments of sudden or mortal danger, in an instant that is too fast to be perceived by ordinary human consciousness. It rises up and restores and transmits strength to the organism as the latter abandons itself and falls asleep. There is another image of such great power that it may overwhelm hostile forces even in the body: the image of a gigantic white skeleton, made of lightning bolts.

If you persevere in these practices you will grow in the knowledge that thoughts and feelings are not incorporeal and "spiritual," floating in the air, but rather almost tangible moving objects, which can be handled, moved, projected, changed, put down, loaded and unloaded, each one endowed with its own form. This form can be *seen* and derives from the "sign" of the being that emanates those thoughts or feelings.

Magical images can be invented, but you need to understand how much more efficacious are those that resemble the forms and the real signs of the states that they fix. Those who *see* may suggest images that afford more leverage for mental magic. These people also know the symbols that, having been realized plastically in the imagination, shape it and inform it, so as to establish a real, effective contact with the corresponding powers. The slow ascent of the Moon on the horizon and the Sun that rises, scattering the darkness, are two image-ways for communicating with the cosmic forces of destruction and creation, respectively. The sense of Light as well as that of Fire that are evoked during the phase of concentration propitiate the experience of the two aspects of the subtle body, and so forth.

Having denied, exhausted, and extinguished everything that in his feeling and willing is craving or aversion, sympathy or antipathy, mania of

affirmation, attachment, selfishness, and instinctive reactions, being endowed with a steady, calm, collected, impassible mind, the magus, with a sovereign glance, sees as *figures* the feelings that have descended upon him or on other people he is looking at. He can act directly on these images at will: it is enough for his mind to assume them and to project them transformed, or for his eye to change them with a glance of command, to produce a corresponding change in the soul of the other person.

Likewise, if he wishes he can evoke in himself the image of a certain feeling, turn it on, and saturate it with his fluid. If then, by focusing his mind on another person, and by inwardly actualizing the gesture of taking it from one place and placing it in another, he *sees* the image in the other person, in the heart, and that same feeling or state will be infused in him/her.

These operations are possible even when one has not yet attained the vision, through images that are not real—meaning those that do not correspond to "signatures"—but invented, provided they have a sufficient suggestive and analogical power; provided that one knows how to *fix* in them the relative and given element; and, in the end, provided that the action does not go too deep, for then there will be very energetic resistances.

Finally, at its highest potency, the image stirs, enflames, and provokes resurrection even in the world of natural things.

The substance of nature is *desire* ∇.

In the intelligence and in conscious will, the goal of movement is an idea, or an ideal to be fulfilled, or something that may be and yet is not: in other words, it is a *possibility* to be realized. But the appearance of desire ushers in identification, a dark directness of contact, and necessity. It brings the act increasingly closer to the realization it is striving toward: the duration of the movement contracts, virtuality is confused with tendency and tendency with action. With the gradual shortening of the interval separating movement and its purpose, the idea can no longer be distinguished, but is confused and precipitates in the act and in the object: it increasingly takes on the form of the being, and it becomes the being itself. Nothing now separates the agent and the action, the ideal and the real, the subject

and the object. This intelligence that sinks in its own act, which is blind yearning, thus becoming instinct, mechanism, automatism, or a vibrating and convulsive force absorbed into its objects—such is the deep essence of what appears to you as nature. Nature is the identification of the end with the beginning of an act, the degradation of freedom into something mechanical; it is the precipitation of elementary intelligences that are lost in the blind tendency to persevere in the very act that constitutes them, in the substantiality of their "images." Thus, imprisoned in the materiality of things, signs and symbols are asleep, as abysmal images of light, gestures of power and illumination that the law of yearning has obscured and crucified in the sphere of fate.[126]

And even this contraction and acceleration, by which the idea leaves the sphere of freedom and degenerates into sensation, instinct, and nature, shows the timeless speed of *acts* that cross your mind without it being aware of them and retaining their perception. Thus, the mind itself sees only *facts*—things, beings, already in a form of exteriority, of ex-istence—and material movements in a series: these are the *precipitates* (in the chemical sense) of the subtle world.

But when you have succeeded in slaying desire, yearning, and dark striving within you; when you succeed in stopping and in fixing the irrational effort that dominates the depths of your being, and adjusted yourself to the *magic* rapidity in conceiving and in intervening—then you will be able to turn to an analogous realization in the sphere of nature. You will then stop in your spirit the acts of beings before they precipitate in the form of material things. At that point you will no longer be confronted with a material world, but with a world of *images* and your knowledge will consist in action, rather than passion. In your *Yes* (love, consent) you will live the dark forces of beings transfigured as intellectual acts. In your *No* (opposition, dominion), by projecting your strength ☉ into the image that sustains the being's body of craving ☿, you will create a transcendental transformation that will be translated into an invisible following of your command on the part of that which, in the order of nature, depends on that being. This will happen because your consecration as the Released, the Uprooted, the Escaped One, is a power of freedom that imposes itself

126. Cf. F. Ravaisson, *De l'Habitude,* Paris, 1927, pp. 36–40, 44–45, 47, 50–51, 60.

on the demonic realm and on the law of necessity of the forces made of yearning, bringing them to a halt.

Thus, as you progressively *fix* yourself, pulling yourself out of the "Waters," your capability to intercept and to maintain the various energies and impressions at their subtle state will increase. Corresponding images will naturally flow into you, instead of the representation of reflected phenomena and apparitions recorded by physical senses: at first, the images of your inner psychological world (thoughts and feelings) and your own "figure"; more deeply, the images buried within the organs and movements of your body. Deeper yet, the signs of the kingdoms, the natural and stellar forces and influences, the Twelve and the Seven.

And if it will be given to you to achieve adeptship, nothing will ever be able to act directly and contingently on you. Everything will confront you in the sudden apparition of an image that tries to be accepted and willed: the same will happen with fatigue, love, sickness, sleep, and what gradually awakens and arises from the subterranean realm of instinct and physiological automatism. According to the law of necessity, the only images that will be allowed to overpower you are those images that your mind is unable to hold on to, in order to transform its obscurely demonic nature, its blind spontaneity, into *Sun*.

Pietro Negri

An Italian Alchemical Text on Lead Tablets

In 1910 a small work appeared entitled: *A Little Book of Alchemy Written on Lead Plates in the 14th Century,* preserved in the library of the late Prof. Scipio Lapi. Published with an introduction, notes, and 13 facsimiles by Angelo Marinelli, with a preface by Prof. Cesare Annibaldi. Città di Castello Tipografia dello Stabilmento S. Lapi, 1910, in 8vo, 62 pages."

The original leaden text is a "rectangular, 36-page booklet, numbered on recto and verso, made of lead plates about one millimeter thick." According to both Marinelli and Annibaldi, the book dates undoubtedly to the fourteenth century. However, Carbonelli, in one of his works (Giovanni Carbonelli, *Sulle fonti storiche della Chimica e dell'Alchimia in Italia,* Rome, 1925), has written about this booklet and compared it to another similar leaden text preserved in the Florentine Diplomatic Archive. Carbonelli traced both of these texts to the same period: according to him they are written in characters of the first half of the sixteenth century. We believe, and will give our reasons, that the booklet published by Marinelli is an even later text, dating from the first half of the seventeenth century, to be precise. As far as the second text is concerned, on which Cesare Guasti lectured in 1859 (a lecture found in Guasti's *Opere,* vol. III, part I, pp. 93–102, Prato, 1896), it is if anything a little earlier than the first. The issue at stake is not merely of a scholarly nature: among other things, it is connected to a matter of a very arduous and controversial historical nature, namely the relationship between Hermeticism and Freemasonry.

On the cover of the booklet, which has a faceted back, we see in the middle of the first page the image of the sun with a man's face, surrounded by alternating straight and wavy rays. In the middle of the fourth page we see the image of the crescent moon with a man's face, whose pointed beard

forms one of the extremities. The text of the booklet is interposed with illustrations that have been reproduced (but not photographically) by Marinelli. As we refer to Marinelli's work, we will briefly describe these images, following the order of the context, thus reproducing step-by-step the text of the booklet.

The first plate contains an elaborately adorned chariot, drawn above the clouds by four horses, in which is seated a fully dressed human figure, whose head is surrounded by a radiant aureole. This figure holds the reins in one hand and a whip with many cords in the other. The face is beardless—a detail that led Marinelli to conclude that it represents Dawn on her chariot illuminated by the sun, which can be seen in the upper-right corner.

At the bottom of the illustration it reads: *"Pater eius est Sol; mater eius est Luna"* (Its father is the sun; its mother, the moon). This saying is from the "Emerald Tablet" attributed to Hermes, the "Father of Philosophers." The charioteer driving the four horses reminds one of Basilius Valentinus's *"Triumphal Chariot of Antimony"* (1604), and more exactly Nicholas Barnaud's *"Auriga ad quadrigam auriferam"* (1601). The closeness of the words *auriga* (charioteer) and *aurum* (gold) is very evident and typical of the Hermeticists' style. However, this comparison is etymologically incorrect since *auriga* derives from the Sankrit *arv* = horse (the runner), though at Barnaud's time the comparison must have appeared undeniable and very suggestive. The four horses represent the four elements; the clouds tell us that this scene does not take place on earth, but in heaven; in other words, one should not look for a material meaning but rather for a spiritual one.[127]

On the second page of the booklet we see a bearded and half-naked man with a scythe, sitting on a small mound of earth, underneath a tree. On his chest is drawn the symbol of Saturn; at the bottom of the plate we read: *"Hic est pater, et mater eius, sive lapis noster et philosophorum"* (This is his father and mother, namely our stone and the philosophers' stone). The fact that this figure symbolizes Saturn can be ascertained by the scythe. Saturn, the Italic deity of sown fields (Varro wrote: *"ab satu dictus Saturnus"*—Saturn is named from sowing), carries the scythe for the ensuing harvest.

127. This can also mean that what we are dealing with here are operations and elements that refer to the subtle plane. (Note by UR)

It will come as no surprise to meet Saturn right at the start, especially when we think of the *saturnia regna* (rule of Saturn) of the *golden age.*

Alchemically speaking, Saturn is lead, namely the metal that our alchemical text, as well as the other codex, is made of. Ancient Egyptian alchemists regarded lead as the progenitor of the other metals. Its name was also applied to any white and fusible metal or alloy, namely tin (white lead), and lead and tin alloys, which were likewise combined with antimony, zinc, etc. Our lead is that which Pliny and the ancients called "black lead" (and this is the apparent etymology of the Latin word *plumbeum*) in contrast to white lead, namely tin. Lead ores often contain silver, so that when working with them it looked as if the only thing to do was to imitate and to help nature in the work of transmutation. The specific weight of the metal and the slow movement of the planet Saturn, the farthest from earth (Uranus and Neptune had not yet been discovered), made lead a natural symbol for what in human beings is thick, slow, and heavy, namely the entire bodily organism. This correspondence is not merely the result of our induction, but a matter of fact, as can be seen in this ancient six-line French stanza:

Il est une partie dans l'homme
Dont le nom six lettres consomme.
Si tu y vas un P adjoiutant
Puis l'S en M permutant
Tu trouveras sans nul ambages
Le vray nom du subjet des Sages.

(There is a part in man
Whose name is of six letters.
If you will add a P
Then change the S to M,
You will find with no trouble
The true name of the Matter of the Wise.)

The third figure of our Hermetic booklet represents the *Rebis,* or Hermetic hermaphrodite.

This symbol, probably the most important Hermetic one, can be traced

from alchemist to alchemist as far back as to Zosimus Panopolitanus, who was initiated into the Egyptian mysteries either at the end of the third century or at the beginning of the fourth century A.D.

According to Zosimus:

> *This is the great and divine mystery—the object that is sought. This is the All. From it the All (proceeds) and for it the All (exists). Two natures, one essence; for one attracts the other and dominates it. This is the silver water* (ἀργύριον), *the hermaphrodite* (ἀρσενόθηλου *from* ἄρρεν = *virile and* θῆλυς = *feminine), which always eludes us, and which is always attracted to its own elements. It is the divine water that the whole world has neglected, whose nature is difficult to contemplate, for it is neither a metal, nor water ever in motion, nor a (metallic) body; it is not dominated.* (Collection des Anciens Alchimistes, Paris, 1888; v. III, p. 146, from ms. 299 of the Biblioteca San Marco di Venezia, eleventh cent.)

In Zosimus this androgynous character is attributed to Mercury (the Greeks' *hydrargyros,* quicksilver).

This symbol appears in the oldest Latin alchemical texts of the Middle Ages, which are nothing other than translations or immediate derivations from Arabic or Hebrew-Arabic texts. This symbol is designated as "Magnesia," "Diabessi stone," and with the singular title of *Rebis,* namely *res bis,* or "double thing." Thus, in writings that have been attributed to Rosino (possibly a corruption of "Zosimus"), which certainly predate the year 1330 (since Rosino is quoted by Pietro Bono in 1330), we read: "Take the stone found everywhere, called Rebis . . . which means *binas res,* or two things, namely the wet and cold and the dry and warm" (*Rosimi ad Sarratantam episcopum* in *Auriferae Artis quam Chemian vocant antiquissimi authores, sive Turba Philosophorum,* Basel, 1572, pp. 333–34). Moreover, the alchemist Richardus Anglicus, who was a contemporary of Pietro Bono, wrote: "The stone is one of a kind, just like the medicine that the Philosophers call Rebis, namely a double thing *(res bina),* made of body and either white or red spirit" (Richardus Anglicus, *Correctorium* in *Theatrum Chemicum,* 1602, vol. II, p. 453). Lorenzo Ventura of Venice says, "That thing, out of which the stone is made, is called Rebis, namely composed of *res bis.* . . . It is made of two things, the sperm of the male and the menstruum of the woman; it is born of red and white . . ." (Laurentii Venturae Veneti, *Liber*

de conficiendi Lapidis philosophicis ratione in *Theat. Chem.*, 1602, vol. II, p. 286; the text is also found in the collection by Gratarola, 1561). This list of Hermetic writers who write about Rebis could easily go on. We will mention also Gaston Claveus (*Apologia Chrypsopeia* in *Theat. Chem.*, 1602, II, 46); Philalethes (*Introitus apertus*, Amsterdam, 1667, p. 63, ch. XXIV); and Ireneus Philalethes (*Ennaratio methodica trium Gebri medicinarum . . .*, Amsterdam, 1678, p. 13).

Beginning with the second half of the sixteenth century, we find in Hermetic books and manuscripts several graphic portrayals of the Rebis, all depicting it as an androgynous being. We need to briefly discuss these images in order to examine their variations and to establish the origin and the date of the androgyne portrayed in our Hermetic booklet.

As far as we know, the most ancient of these representations is found in the second edition (1593) of the *De Arte aurifera* and in the third edition (1610) of the same. The second volume of this work contains the text called *Rosarium philosophorum* (in which it is erroneously attributed to Arnaldo Villanova), which is also included without pictures in Manget's *Biblioteca Chemica Curiosa* (II, 87), as the work of an anonymous author. This is one of the alchemical texts of the fourteenth century, and a derivation, if not translation, of Arabic or Hebrew-Arabic texts. The tenth figure (*Artis auriferae quam Chemiam vocant*, Basel, 1593, II, 291; and 1610, II, p. 190) represents (see our fig. 1) the Hermetic androgyne, standing above the crescent moon. It has a winged back, and in its right hand holds a cup, from which the heads and necks of three little snakes emerge; in its left hand it holds a coiled snake. On the bottom, on the right side we see a bird, and on the left side a little tree with six pairs of lunar faces and an extra one on the top. The seventeenth figure (p. 359 of the 2nd ed., p. 235 of the 3rd) is merely a variation of the tenth figure; the androgyne is dressed instead of being naked, and instead of standing on the crescent moon it stands on a little mound out of which three snakes emerge; behind its legs lies an old lion. It has bat's wings, and on the right side we see again the three heads of snakes, while on the left side the coiled snake. On the right side, at the bottom, there is a swan or a pelican with one of its young; on the left side we can see the same tree mentioned before. On the top we read: *"Perfectionis ostensio"* (depiction of perfection).

According to the authoritative opinion of Michael Maier, this figure "expresses the compendium of the entire art with an allegorical description, in German verses, of the two-headed figure of both masculine and feminine appearance, which holds in its right hand three snakes and in the left hand a single serpent." (*Symbola Aureae Mensae duodecim nationum authore Michaele Maiero,* Frankfurt, 1617, VI, p. 274). See also what Abraxas wrote in relation to this in chapter VI.

Three years after the last edition of the *De Arte auriferea* we find in a famous Hermetic work a representation of the Rebis, with an important innovation, which also appears on our plate, namely the replacement of the Hermetic symbols in the hands of the Rebis with the two most important symbols of Masonry, namely the square and the compass. In fact, the second edition of the *Theatrum Chemicum* (Strasbourg, 1613), contains (IV, p. 468) the work entitled *Aureliae Occultae Philosophorum Partes duo,* which can easily be identified with Basilius Valentinus's *Azoth,* whose text is also found in Manget's work (1702) (*Bibl. Chem. Cur.* II, 217), in which it is attributed to the Arab author Zadith. The *Aurelia Occulta Philosophorum* is adorned with a dozen figures, the fifth of which, reproduced here (see fig. 2 on page 280), represents the Rebis.

At the top, we read *Materia Prima.* The whole figure is enclosed within an egg (the philosophical egg of Hermetic generation); in the center stands the Rebis, fully dressed, with its feet on the back of a winged dragon, endowed with four legs and breathing fire out of its mouth. The dragon, in turn, stands over a winged globe, within which we can see a cross, an equilateral triangle, and a square. On the higher and lower vertices of the cross we can read the numbers 1 and 2; along the perimeters of the triangle and of the square we read the numbers 3 and 4, respectively.

The Rebis of Basilius Valentinus holds in its right hand a compass and in the left a square. The right hand corresponds to the masculine part of the figure (a detail that is inverted in the plate of the Italian alchemical text). On the chest of the androgyne we read "Rebis." Interestingly enough, the letters of the word *Rebis,* written from right to left, are all inverted; the word is seen as it would appear by looking in a mirror. From the middle of the chest, rays lead to the astrological symbols of the seven planets, or to the alchemical symbols of the seven corresponding metals, all arranged in

a circle beginning with the left (the feminine part) and then, descending, in this order: Saturn, Jupiter, Moon, Mercury, Sun, Mars, Venus. Thus the symbol of Mercury is at top center between the two heads, one masculine, the other feminine. After this table comes a lengthy explanation, very sibylline, which we will not reproduce for the sake of brevity.

The Rebis, in Basilius Valentinus's variation, soon became a very popular Hermetic symbol, thanks to the importance of this author. We do not know if it appeared in the German edition of Basilius Valentinus's *Occulta Philosophia* (1613). However, it is found in the French editions of *Azoth* (Paris, 1624; 2nd ed., 1659) and in the third edition of the *Theatrum Chemicum* (1659–61). It is also reproduced in the 140th engraving found at the end of the third volume of Mylius's *Basilica Philosophica* (1620), and therefore, together with the other figures found in the *Basilica,* in Daniel Stolz's *Hortulus hermeticus* (Frankfurt, 1627). We could easily complete the list of these reproductions of Rebis by Basilius Valentinus, all the way to the most recent ones, by Silberer, Poisson, and Wirth: however, it will suffice to notice how this symbol appeared only in 1613 and how it became widespread in the first half of the seventeenth century.

Figure 1. Hermetic androgyne from the Rosarium Philosophorum, *reproduction from vol. II, p. 291, of* Artis auriferae quam Chemiam vocant, *Basel, 1593.*

The androgyne portrayed on the plate of the Italian Hermetic text is obviously a derivation from it; only the roughness of the drawing can have induced Marinelli and Carbonelli to give it an earlier date. Even the saying at the bottom is obviously taken from the figure found in the *Aurelia Occulta Philosophorum*.

The Rebis of Basilius Valentinus is different from all other previous representations of the Hermetic androgyne, especially from those of the *Artis auriferae*, due to the masonic rather than alchemical symbols that replace the coiled snake, the three-headed snake, and other symbols in other versions of it. Another innovation, without leaving the Hermetic field, is that of the seven planets around Rebis and of the dragon and winged globe beneath it.

This dragon and globe have disappeared in the plate of our booklet, as has the word *Rebis* found on the androgyne's chest. In exchange, this Rebis

Figure 2. The Rebis of Basilius Valentinus: reproduction from Aurelia Occulta Philosophorum, *in* Theatrum Chemicum, *Strasbourg, 1613, vol. IV.*

is endowed with an eye on each elbow, which is obviously the representation of extraordinary vision. Moreover, on the two thighs, in correspondence to the masculine and feminine sides, we find two rough drawings of male and female genitals. Above the vulva, the artist drew a globe surmounted by a cross; above the penis, a diamond. This globe surmounted by the cross with a diamond at the side constitutes a symbol of antimony (cf. *Theatro d'Arcani* by the physician Lodovico Locatelli, Bergamo, 1644, p. 409); thus, in open contradiction, the *prima materia sapientis* (first matter of the wise) is no longer lead, but antimony. The fact that this is really antimony is confirmed by the first tablet of the Florentine leaden codex, which contains an equilateral triangle with the point up, and nine letters written along its sides. Above it is written: *Benedicta* (sic) *lapidem Prima materia est* (Blessed be the stone: it is the first matter). The nine letters (*nine,* just like the nine leaden tablets of this codex) constitute the word *antimonio;* it is odd that both Guasti and Carbonelli were unaware of this. Beneath the triangle is written: *Ego sum Ambasagar quo dabo a tibi veri secretum secretissimum noster.* Written in ungrammatical Latin, this sentence means: "I am Ambasagar, the one who will reveal to you our innermost secret."

The Florentine treatise ends by saying that the matter on which one needs to operate is "a cheap one, called 'Saturn,' father and son"; it then adds: "Look at the triangle." In this way it identifies Lead (Saturn) and Antimony. Marinelli's book, on page VII, says the same thing: "This matter is called chosen and immature mineral or your Saturn *ex hoc* ♁♢ [*ex hoc* = "from this"], this is black mineral earth." After all, the identification of Saturn with Antimony was theoretically made at the beginning of the *Liber Secretus* of Artefius. He was the first (eleventh century) to use the word *"antimony,"* which probably derives from the Arabic *"athmond"* or from the Greek *"ithmi"* (στίμμι) with the addition of *"al."* This identification also leads us back to Basilius Valentinus, to his times, to his *chariot* and to his *regulus of antimony.* By melting the mineral with *black sulfur,* namely with antimony ($Sb_2 S_3$, antimony trisulfide; crude antinomy), sulfur produces sulfides with all extraneous metals, and the gold of the mineral unites with the metallic antimony that is now free (the regulus of antimony of the ancients), producing a regulus or button of antimony and gold. It is sufficient

to warm this regulus, taking advantage of the lowest degree of fusion and of the volatility of Antimony, in order to isolate the gold. This fusion with (sulfur of) antimony was called "the king's bath," or the "sun's bath" *(balneum solius regis);* antimony, by means of which all the metals disappeared and only gold was left, was called the *wolf* that devours all metals.

Guasti came to the conclusion that Ambasagar was the author of the little treatise, though he confessed that he was unable to trace the original author and work. The key of the mystery lies in the fourth plate of Marinelli's alchemical booklet, which we describe here. According to Marinelli, "In the fourth figure we can see a man scarcely clad with a fluttering cloth, who holds in his right hand a small globe covered with a cross. In his left hand he has a clock, and on each elbow there is an eye; this is an evident, though curious, personification of time."

At the bottom of the plate it says: *Ego sum Tubalchaimo qui dabo tibi verissimum secretum secretissimum nostrum.* This is the same sentence as in the Florentine codex, this time without grammatical errors, and with the replacement of Ambasagar with Tubalcain. In his right hand this figure carries the first symbol of antimony; in the left, a tablet that is cut above in a semicircle. Within it, there is a symbol that Marinelli mistook for a watch, and in which Carbonelli instead saw the symbol of fire 🜂 and of gold ☉. However, this circle is inside a square, which recalls the square surmounted by a triangle, another symbol of the antimony that was popular in the seventeenth century. We may also observe that these four elements, namely the circle, the cross, the triangle, and the square, are also found, though in a different order, within the winged globe of the Rebis of Basilius Valentinus. We may also see in the circle inside the square a representation of the *squaring of the circle,* another symbol that was used in a Hermetic sense during the first half of the seventeenth century (see Michael Maier, *De circulo phisico quadrato, hoc est auro . . .*, Oppenheim, 1616). We must note that inside the plate there is in fact not a representation of a circle, but rather that of a spiral; if this is intentional, and not the result of the artist's lack of expertise, we need to consider yet another interpretation. The spiral is not a usual alchemical or Hermetic symbol: it represents the *vortex* of life, and if it is placed within the square, which is symbol of form, and under the sign 🜂 of Hermetic fire, it symbolizes the vortex of life in the ongoing creation, within the interplay of the two opposite aspects of form

that are represented by the two couples on the opposite sides of the square.

Tubalcain is the "forger of all instruments of bronze and iron" mentioned in the Bible (Genesis 4:19–22), and this is briefly how and why he has his place in the alchemical plate. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the majority of scholars tried to explain all languages by referring them to Hebrew, which was spoken by Adam and Eve, and by the Eternal Father himself at the time of the Garden of Eden. Thus, Hebrew was regarded as the mother tongue of every language. Following this logic, Tubalcain was identified with Vulcan, both because of the phonetic similarity and because Vulcan was the blacksmith of the gods. John Funger, in his *Etymologicum Trilingue* (Frankfurt, 1605—see pp. 859, 916, 917 of the 1607 ed.) wrote: "Vulcan is obviously a derivation of Tubalcain." Twenty years later, the same identification is found in an even more popular text of etymology: "Tubalcain, Thubalkain, namely *terrenus possessor,* or Vulcan, master of copper, or of metals . . ." (Christian Beckman, *Manuditio ad latinam linguam,* 5th ed., 1672, p. 1124; 1st ed., 1626). Samuel Bohart: "Vulcan is Tubalcain, as the name suggests." (*Opera Omnia,* 1712, vol. I, p. 399; 1st ed., 1646). Vossius (1662) and Stillingfleet (1662) came to the same conclusion as well.

While scholars identified Vulcan and Tubalcain, alchemists and Hermeticists attributed to him an alchemical or Hermetic nature. Gerhard Dorn, in the second half of the sixteenth century, mentioned a certain "Vulcanic Abraham Tubalcain, an alchemist, astrologer, and mathematician who brought from Egypt the various arts and sciences to the land of Canaan" (G. Dorn, *Congeries Paracelsicae* in *Theatrum Chemicum,* 1613, II, 592; Dorn's writings appeared between 1567 and 1569). Michael Maier mentions how, understandably, "many people attribute the first practice of Chemistry" to Tubalcain. Olao Borricchio too, a historian and apologist of alchemy, identifies Vulcan and Tubalcain (*De Ortu et de progressu Chemiae,* Hafniae, 1668). This identification and this alchemical character of Tubalcain were popular throughout the eighteenth century, a trend that was probably responsible for the adoption of Tubalcain as a password by French and Rhineland masonic lodges between 1730 and 1742. This password appears mainly in the *Ordre des Franc-Maçons trahi* . . . (Geneva, 1742) and in *Der Neu-aufgesteckte Brennende Leuchter* . . . (Leipzig, 1746), at a time when the typical Hermetic degrees began to emerge in continental Masonry.

The Tubalcain of our plate is evidently, then, the Tubalcain who invented

the art of working metals, and therefore the inventor of transmutation, of which he has good reason to claim that he can give us the secret. However, this identification leads us back approximately to the first half of the seventeenth century, at the peak of its popularity. Thus everything conspires to attribute the creation of our alchemical booklet to this date.

As far as the Ambasagar of the other leaden codex is concerned, we may suppose that it signifies *ambus agar,* "May I be led to perform both" (i.e., operations, both *albedo* and *rubedo*). Or, maybe, it means *ambas agam,* namely "May I perform both" (i.e., operations). Again, it may be that the nine letters are the initials of some Hermetic saying, just as in the case of the word *vitriolum.* It is almost certain that these words, *Tubalcain, antimonio, ambasagar, vitriolum,* are intentionally composed of nine letters, and the end of our booklet shows us why. The tradition that attributes nine letters to the name of the "first matter" is very ancient. The Greek alchemists identified it in this way:

ἔννεα γράμματ' ἔχω, τετρασύλλαβος εἰμὶ, νόει με.
Αἱ τρεῖς μὲν πρῶται δύο γράμματ' ἔχουσιν ἑκάστη,
Αἱ λοιπαὶ δὲ τὰ λοιπὰ. καί εἰσιν ἄφωνα τὰ πέντε.
Οὐκ ἀμύητος ἔσῃ τῆς παρ' ἐμοὶ σοφίας

(I have nine letters, am four-syllabled, and you will know me, because the first three [syllables] are each of two letters, and the last of the rest, and there are five consonants in all. You will be initiated into the wisdom that I possess.)

The key to this riddle is the word ἀρ–σε–νι–κόν = arsenic, composed of nine letters, four syllables, four vowels, and five consonants. Arsenic was the ancient name of orpiment (from *auri pigmentum*), which is an arsenic sulfide. This was regarded as a second mercury, due to the identity of its behavior. It is easy to see how ambasagar is composed of the same number of letters, vowels, and consonants as ar-se-ni-kon. With some variations, they conform to the same law of composition of the words *Tubalcain, vitriolum, antimony,* and other words of lesser importance in the hermetic literature, such as ἀμ–πε–λῖ–τις = *terra vinealis,* which the Hermeticists of the seventeenth century regarded as the true solution of the above-mentioned riddle. Even in the alchemical manuscripts we find traces of this

tradition; an example can be found in a representation of Gerber in an ancient manuscript, reported by Carbonelli (op. cit., p. 57), which has at the bottom the word *Riovrabet.*

The fifth plate of the alchemical booklet contains only these words: *"Benedictam lapidem LAPIS NOSTER."* And further on, *"Benedictus qui venit in nomine domini."* Then the text begins, divided into seven short chapters that we are going to reproduce here followed by a few explanatory notes. The first little chapter is a prologue to the next five, all of which are devoted to the various operations. The last chapter is the epilogue, unless it has been added by someone else. The first short chapter fills the plates VI–XII of the booklet. Here is the text:

The Great Work can be performed either according to the humid or the dry way.[128] In the first way, one employs pure dew, hail, or *fior coclis.*[129]

In the second way one employs matter that has been prepared by nature for the imperfect metallic work[130]:

This matter is called elect and immature mineral, or "your Saturn." This ♁◊ is black mineral earth[131] that is still green and heavy, and it is

128. Even today, in chemistry, analysis can be through either a dry way or a humid way. In regard to both ways according to Hermeticism, see the essay by Abraxas in chapter II, entitled "Three Ways."

129. The text reads *"fior coclis,"* but this is obviously a misspelling of *"fior coeli." Flos coeli* [*flos* is the Latin term, *fior* the later Italian term] is in fact an alchemical term designating some kind of manna. Hermetically speaking, "fior coeli" (i.e., "flower of heaven") is the heavenly grace that descends on a mystic like dew flowing from heaven to nourish the parched land. In mystics one does detect something humid or dewy, which is not very sympathetic to the followers of the dry and regal way.

130. According to alchemists, metals are formed in the bowels of the earth; nature always tends toward perfection, but sometimes the metallic work is imperfect. Thus, the alchemist must take this imperfect metal and transform it. The same happens and must be done in Hermeticism with our Saturn.

131. G. Johnson's dictionary (cf. Manget, *Bibl. Chem. Cur.,* 1702) says: "Antimony is called the Dregs of Lead, Our Mercury, Marcasite, Mined Lead, Dead Lead, Black Earth." It is still green because it is immature; it is coarse because it has not yet been purified; it is heavy because it is still subject to the earthly law of gravity.

called mafesia[132] or saturnine marcasite.[133] If that matter had cooked longer in the bowels of the earth, and if it had not been mixed by accident with various impurities, it would have been the sacred sun and moon: for Saturn is the first principle of the metals, which is therefore called leprous Gold ☉.[134]

This gold must be purified from this leprosy and from other drosses in the easiest and quickest way. But in order for Gold to be utilized, it first needs to be reduced to seed,[135] that the first matter may grow as much as is proper to this earth. Out of it we need to draw the true mercury, or the

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132. This is a misspelling of "Magnesia." Johnson's dictionary reads: "Magnesia communiter est marcasita." (Manget, I, 250)

133. Today an iron sulfide that differs from the ordinary pyrite for the way in which it becomes crystallized is called *marcasite* (white pyrite). Once this word designated various minerals, which contained sulfides of other metals. According to G. Johnson, "Marcasite is an immature metallic matter, of many species . . ." In an anonymous letter found in the third edition of *Theatrum Chemicum* (VI, 475) we read: "Besides vulgar lead there is another lead in which philosophers are interested, namely Magnesia. Magnesia is black earth with white eyes. Such black earth is leaden Marcasite, namely Antimony. Antimony is in fact the Lead mentioned by philosophers; from it is extracted the vegetable quicksilver of a red color, which possesses the secret of all secrets."

134. Leprosy corrodes the limbs and leads to death.

135. In other words, it must acquire the faculty to multiply. According to Alexandrian alchemists, the procedure for obtaining gold consisted in a *diplosis* or duplication. For practical purposes, all that is required to alter the malleability of gold is a small quantity of antimony vapors emanating from a basin filled with molten antimony, since antimony mixes with gold very easily. Considering the imperfect methods of separation, it may have looked as if the quantity of gold had increased. Analogically speaking, in Hermeticism, Gold is multiplied by bathing it in *our* antimony.

According to the Cosmopolite (*Novum Lumen Chemicum*, X, 1604): "Gold may produce fruit and seeds, in which it multiplies with the activity of the wise creator, who knows how to lead nature forward . . . but in order for this to happen, if the spirit does not appear in the frozen metallic body, it is first necessary to melt the body and to allow its pores to open, so that nature may operate. There are two types of solutions, a natural one and a violent one (which includes all others). . . . The natural one consists in allowing the body's pores to open in our water, so that the digested seed may be emanated and imposed to its matrix. Our water is heavenly water that does not wet the hands: it is rainwater (i.e., descending from heaven) and not ordinary water. The body is the Gold that produces seed."

On this matter see what Luce wrote in chapter I, and what Abraxas wrote in chapters III and IV.

clear water found in the royal bath.[136] This matter can be found in many places where lead and tin are mined, though it is more perfect in one place than in another.

In Bohemia, near Prague, there is a good mine where lead is found, resembling butter but black and of an acidic spirit. Many people have found such matter in the well-preserved receptacle of Saturn, which is virgin lead called *Saturno pater, et Saturno filii* (Saturn father and Saturn son).

The first operation is described in the plates XIII–XVII of the booklet. At the top of plate XIII it is written: *"Si volunt procedere fiat totum in nomine domini. Hop. Prima."* This means: "If they want to proceed, let everything be done in the name of the Lord." Here is the text:

FIRST OPERATION

R.^{e} ♑[137] The center of this matter→♁◊ operates as if it were in the bowels of the earth. Having pulverized its accuracy in a very subtle way,[138]

136. Chemically speaking, the mineral needs to be transformed into water, or to be liquefied. This is done with the bath of the King or of the Sun, namely by melting the mineral together with black sulfur (antimony sulfide). The experience taught how the chemical reaction was made easier, if not possible, by the solution or fusion.

Hermetically speaking, see what Abraxas wrote in chapter III concerning the "first extraction of Mercury from the Mine." True Mercury is *our Water,* clear or transparent Water (in Greek *hydrargyros* or silver-water). See again the Cosmopolite's passage previously quoted. In this *solution* lies the *solution* of the problem. One of the sayings taken from John Braccesco's two dialogues *(De alchemia dialogi duo),* which was translated from Italian and placed in the foreword of the Latin edition (Lyon, 1548), reads: "From the solution of vitriol a dual vapor *(fumus)* is produced, and these two fumes are called by philosophers "Sulfur" and "Mercury."

137. R.^{e} = abbreviation for *recipe,* "take." One needs to refer to or go in the center (heart) of our Saturn or Antimony, as if dwelling within one's own bowels (the *interiora* ["interior"] of Basilius Valentinus). The symbol of this Earth is formed by the symbol of the earth ♁, namely by the globe surmounted by a cross (the cross symbolizes the consecration of the equilibrium and neutrality that have been previously attained by placing oneself in the center and separating oneself from the periphery) and by the symbol ◊, which is possibly formed by the overlapping of the symbols △ and ▽, reiterating the same concept in a certain sense.

138. This is the transformation and separation of the subtle from the gross, mentioned in the "Emerald Tablet." It is the shift to the *fluidic state and body* mentioned by Abraxas.

and having passed it through a very tight silk sieve,[139] put it in ♌ and subject it to ♎ .[140] After placing it on a very strong flame, distill it in an open container; this operation is called "extraction of the elements."[141] The retort, in order to be able to endure on the fire, must be luted at the bottom[142] and the fire must last sixteen hours. In the beginning it must be a light fire fed with coals, until the spirit or Mercury is produced.[143] At the end, the fire must be very strong, and fed with wood, so that ☤ may be attached in the retort.[144] Keep the spirit well closed in the o = o[145] and scrape the sulfur with all diligence through the second work.

The chapter ends with the illustration of a star with seven points. In correspondence to each point we see the symbols of the seven planets in the same order and arrangement found in the Rebis of Basilius Valentinus. Each tip of the star is split into two parts, one clear, the other dark. Inside the star there is a circle in which we can see an infant with a crowned head. Inside the circle there is a saying: *Qui rex natus a Philosophis est Lapis Noster* (This king born from the philosophers is our stone).[146]

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139. This very tight sieve apparently corresponds to the *pores* of our metallic body, mentioned by the Cosmopolite in the passage we have quoted before. These pores must open up in order to melt down the body. A few of *us*, including myself, have even had a visual perception of this sieve on numerous occasions. Some may be inclined to think of a connection between the *sieve* of the Eleusinian Mysteries and this *chymica vannus;* but as suggestive as this comparison may be, I think it is nevertheless groundless.

140. Place it sideways and ignite it. This is the second regimen, or ignification, mentioned by Abraxas in chapter VI.

141. Mercury ☿ clear water and the inner Fire or ☤.

142. The Hermetic seal that isolates the inside of the container from the outside.

143. At first the fire must be slow and gentle (see the essay by Abraxas in chapter III) because spirit or Mercury *first* needs to be extracted.

144. In the second phase *the fire* must be very strong, so that sulfur ☤ may touch and stick to the retort.

145. It is necessary to keep the spirit from escaping out of the earthen tube.

146. This is the *infans secundae generationis* of the Cosmopolite; it is the *regulus* (little king) of the antimony of Basilius (little king) Valentinus. And it is the divine child mentioned by Luce in chapter II.

Plate XVIII bears the inscription: *Infantem natum debes alimentare usque ad aetatem perfectam;* namely, "The infant who is now born must be fed until he reaches the perfect age." What follows is the operation according to plates XVIII–XX–XXI.

SECOND OPERATION

Take your ♆ and purify it by sublimating it three times; every time put back that which is at the bottom together with what has come up. R.^{e} the spirit that is ☿; together with the latter put ten grains of this sulfur.[147] Put it at the lowest point and then for forty days[148] in an alembic with a blind hat. After forty days take it out; in place of the hat put on the other rostrum; distill everything and remove the dregs at the bottom. Make sure that when distilling, the container does not become glued and leaky in the alembic. Having done that, place it in a well-sealed glass and hide it in a cool place, so that the spirits may not come out and roam around.

The chapter ends with the following line: *Hic est donus* (sic) *dei optimum* (this is the best gift of God). Plates XXII, XXIII, and XXIV contain the:

THIRD OPERATION

R.^{e} as much weight of your ♆ according to the quantity of your ☿ in a flask or vial over which you will sink ten times more than your ☿.[149] Then put on top of it another vial, placing it on sand; use a light fire until the sulfur melts down.[150] Make sure that the vial in which you put the matter has a long neck, while the other vial has a short neck; moreover, make sure that the short neck can fit in the long one, so that the spirits may not

147. In regard to this mixture of Mercury and Sulfur, see what Abraxas wrote in chapter VI.

148. In regard to the number forty in Alchemy and in esotericism, see A. Reghini's article: "La quaresima iniziatica" in *Ignis,* December 1925. The 74th proposition found in the 1548 edition of the *De Alchemia Dialogi duo* claims that the alchemical *nigredo* lasts for forty days.

149. The amount of the doses to be employed was paramount. On this matter, see the essay by Abraxas in chapter III.

150. A light fire is sufficient to attain the fusion of Sulfur, without inducing the evaporation and the boiling of Mercury or the explosion of the flask.

escape while they are circulating inside. This solution, well closed, serves for the next work.

At the bottom of the plates we read: *Item, in rerum moltitudine ars nostra non consistit;* namely, "Our art does not consist in the multitude of things."

Plates XXV and XXVI contain the:

FOURTH OPERATION

R.[e] this solution of sulfur and place it in the alembic as in the second operation, with its lid in the sand. At first use a light fire, so that the spirit may ascend. This spirit is called "virginal milk" for its purity.[151] Then turn up the heat so that the ☥ will adhere to the lid: this is our perfect sulfur, which you need to gather carefully. After putting a lid on the alembic, keep it as well as the spirit, or ☿.

At the bottom we read the following saying: "*Si fixum solvas faciasque volare solvitum, et solutum ridas, faciat te vivere lietum.*[152]

Plates XXVII–XXX contain the:

FIFTH OPERATION

R.[e] your perfect sulfur, on which you will sink ten parts of the Mercury[153] you have prepared. Place it in an egg of ☽ ☉.[154] Having sealed it with the seal of Hermes, place it over a small stove; the heat should not be

151. Virgin's milk. See the essay by Abraxas, chapter VI. The philosophical child, the little king, needs to be fed with "virgin's milk." *Lapis, ut infans, lacte nutriendum est virginali* (the stone, like a child, should be nursed with virgin's milk), says Michael Maier (*Simbola Aureae mensae,* 1617). It is the milk of the virgin Mary in the Rosicrucian allegory. See also the "milky ocean" mentioned by Luce in chapter I.

152. Or, more correctly, *Si fixum solvas, faciasque volare solutum, et solutum deddas, facit te vivere letum:* "If you will melt down that which is fixed, and will cause the solution to disappear, and if you will return the solution to its fixed state, this will cause you to live happily." This is a variation of the saying:

Si fixum solvas, faciasque volare solutum,
Et volucrem figas, facit te vivere letum.

Chemically speaking, the operation is divided into three phases: fusion, volatilization, and reduction.

153. This time Sulfur is perfect and Mercury is prepared. In Greek, the word θειον means both "divine" and "sulfur."

154. An ostrich's egg hermetically sealed.

greater than the temperature of a feverish person. Then the various materials will disintegrate.

At the bottom of Plate XXVIII, at the lower-right corner, we can see a crow carrying in its beak some sort of tablet on which is written *nigro nigrium,* which more correctly and completely should read instead *nigrum nigri nigrius* (the black blacker than black). This alludes symbolically to the first phase of the operation, namely to the *stone in black.* The text continues on Plate XXVIII and says:

After it disintegrates it will turn white.

In this context we see a figure that represents a chariot being drawn above the clouds by two doves. In the chariot there is a seated woman with a half-moon over her head and with a radiating aura behind her head. She holds in her left hand a small flowering branch, the "tree of Diana."[155] After this figure, the text continues:

This is our Diana, whom you can cause to stop here, if you wish, through the work in white.[156] If you wish to go further, keep feeding the fire until the upper part turns red like the color of blood.[157]

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155. The tree of Diana is one of the so-called "metallic trees." The first mention of it is found in *Clavis philosophorum* by Eck de Sulzbach, at the end of the fifteenth century. See the *Theatrum Chemicum,* IV. It is formed by pouring a concentrated solution of Silver nitrate over Mercury; or by pouring water over a concentrated solution of Silver nitrate, making sure that they do not mix, and then dipping a silver plate all the way to the bottom. Hermetically speaking, silver, moon, doves, and the tree of Diana are all symbols of the Work *ad album* (in white).

156. Diana, namely the moon, the shiny one, shining with a reflected light, that is, silver. Etymologically, *argentum* (Silver) means "shiny white" (hence Arjuna, Argus, Argonauts). The two doves (*binae columbae;* two is the symbol of duality, passivity, femininity) are referred to her because of their color; they replace the crow, just as forty days after the Flood, the crow left first, followed by the dove.

157. Namely the Work in Red. In regard to the Work in White and in Black, see the essay by Abraxas in chapter VI. To the notes about symbolism found there, we can add that the zodiac symbol of the Ram ♈, a masculine sign, at the time of Zosimus was also the sign of Sulfur. It follows that when through the ignification or *rubedo* Sulfur ♆ = ♈ is immersed in ☿ passive and feminine Mercury, transforming it into ☿ active and creative Mercury; this ☿ symbolically reunites sulfur ♆ and Mercury ☿.To complete the symbolism of the crow and the doves, corresponding to the color black (Saturn, Lead) and white (Moon, Silver), we will say that red corresponds to the crimson Phoenix (Latin: Phoenix *puniceus* = "red"; *puniceus* is derived etymologically from the Greek *phoinikeios*) that revives amid flames.

At the bottom of the plate we see a man with a crowned head. He holds in his right hand some kind of scepter and in the left hand an elliptical crown with the symbols of the seven planets in the following order: Moon, Jupiter, Saturn, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Sun. In this way Mercury is always in the middle, as in the Rebis of Basilius Valentinus, but this time on the bottom.

Plate XXXI contains on the upper left the image of a cup with its lid held by an arm protruding out of a cloud. It is possibly an image of the Grail. Next to it we read: *"Hic est lapis noster: fortuna medius granus huius est cura omnium morborum incurabilium;* that is, "This is our stone, half of which suffices to heal all incurable diseases." The following text is written on this plate and the next:

R.^{e} an ounce of ☉ purged by means of ♁♢. Liquefy it, test it, and when it reaches boiling point put on it a drachme of your medicine and you will immediately see ☉ coming to a halt and no longer running. What remains is a reddish stone that easily breaks: and this is the philosophers' stone.

What follows is Plate XXXIII, containing an allegorical figure. High above, a crowned human figure holds in both hands a crown; a bit lower, three crowns float in the air. Farther down we find human portrayals of Moon, Mercury, and Saturn, which are characterized by their alchemical symbols. These figures stretch their hands toward the three crowns. On the right we can see Jupiter, Mars, and Venus (the latter already crowned). On the upper right is the sun: the head of the central figure is surrounded by a nimbus of rays. Here too, as in the figure of the Hermetic charioteer and in the figure of Diana, the entire scene does not take place on earth, but above the clouds.

At the bottom we see the saying: *Et hoc est donus Dei qui omnia imperfecta metalia in aurum aurum comutat*—that is, "This is God's gift that transforms into (pure) gold all the imperfect metals." In regard to the Hermetic meaning of the *metals,* see what Luce says in chapters I and II. Plates XXXIV and XXXV contain this admonition:

Make sure that in the beginning the wick is of no more than four or five threads until it becomes black, and that is called putrefaction. After seven threads, it becomes white, which is the philosophers' white daughter. After nine threads it becomes red. The oil of the lamp must be very pure. In the middle of the stove place a copper plate, and on it put the ashes of mistletoe from an oak, from which the salt should be extracted; in them put the philosophical egg. The lamp must not be closer than four fingers from the plate—i.e., from its flame. Continue in this fashion until the

Finis (end). *L. D.* (meaning "Laus Deo" [Praise God])

Non plus ultra (No further)

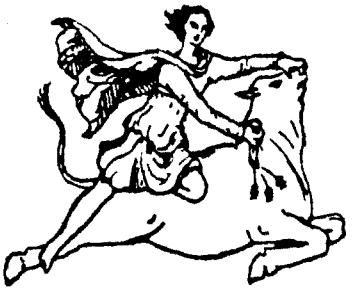
What follows is the last plate that contains the key of the cryptic alphabet in which the booklet is written, preceded by the saying: *Hic est via veritatis,* "This is the way of truth."

Even in this detail the two leaden codices resemble each other: the Florentine codex too is written in code, and it contains at page 18 the key of the characters preceded by the title: *Hic est via veritatis.*

The fact that the two leaden codices are written in code is not insignificant. Obviously the owner of the alchemical book must have held it in great regard, and wanted to make sure that, if it fell into other people's hands, its meaning would be obscure. The great similarity between the two codices suggest that one is a derivation from the other, or both derived from one secret ritual that was their common source. The presence in the alchemical book of Tubalcain and the Rebis of Basilius Valentinus shows that it was later than 1615, and probably belongs to the period 1615–1650, during the golden age of Hermeticism and of the Rosicrucians, after the Cosmopolite and before Philalethes. During this period we know that there were secret Hermetic organizations. Hermeticism penetrated even British Masonry at that time; its influence in the ancient Masonic order can be traced for about two centuries. Are we then looking at the ritual of one of these secret organizations? Or should we assign to this codex a meaning and a value that is exclusively alchemical? Are the coarseness of the drawing and the errors of orthography and grammar in Latin and in Italian to be attributed only to the author of the booklet, or are they the proof of the low cultural level of the booklet's owner? Are these deficiencies enough to exclude the symbolical, Hermetic value of the booklet and to guarantee that we should not see in it anything else than the exposition of the norms of a purely chemical procedure for the extraction of gold?

Modern scholars of alchemy presuppose that in every alchemical writing we are always dealing with chemical operations, despite the explicit declarations to the contrary of so many authors, such as the Cosmopolite and Philalethes. However, we should also be careful not to fall in the opposite error, by giving a symbolical value to something totally devoid of it. By following the text of the alchemical booklet we have tried, within the limits of our competence and of the available space, to shed light on its

literal-alchemical and spiritual-Hermetic meaning. In doing so we have referred to what has been outlined in excellent fashion by Abraxas and by Luce. We do not want to claim that the true symbolical meaning can be attributed to it only in virtue of the methodical correspondence that was traditionally established by Hermeticists between the phases of chemical transformation and the phases of inner transformation; but neither do we want to claim that the meaning that writer of the booklet had in mind was just of inner transformation and that he only strove to hide it, *more philosophico* (in philosophic fashion), under the appearance of chemical transformation. It may well be, after all, that for the writer the two transformations were both possible and that he dealt with them at the same time; and that the Hermetic symbolism was the simple and natural consequence of an analogy of procedure. The expert reader will judge for himself if it is possible to give an answer to these questions, and what answer is most plausible.



X

Luce

Opus Magicum:

Chains

The purpose of magical chains is to determine a collective fluid force that is potentially greater than the one that is available to each of the links separately, and which may be used by every individual participant.

A chain is formed through "syntony" of the elements that compose it, when there is either identity or correspondence, according to the law of numbers, of the inner attitude or of the ritual practiced by several people. Members of these chains could operate either together or in different locations, and even be unaware each other, as long as the rules of timing and rituals are rigorously observed. A chain may be formed intentionally and ceremonially when one or more people establish its purpose and adequately determine its ritual, according to traditional norms. However, the spontaneous forming of a chain is also possible, just as it is possible for a person to become part of it without realizing it.[158] In these cases the condition is one of correspondence of subtle vibrations, which by itself is able to establish a relationship, not withstanding temporal and spatial distances.

The collective force of the chain constitutes a real entity at the service of those who have created it; it is a coagulation of astral light that can be projected into a psychic "figure" and that is strictly connected to the symbols and formulas that have helped to *shape it* in a certain school, community, or tradition. Thus it may happen that merely making some traditional gestures, or uttering names or invocations in the right circumstances, even by an outsider, may provoke phenomena of illumination, apparitions, and realizations that are apparently inexplicable.

In a magical chain that has been consciously created and is actively

158. A case may arise in which a person operates with another person belonging to a chain, or follows its rituals without, however, participating in it, even though various circumstances may cause him to believe otherwise. The reason for such "isolations" is almost always determined by a higher and inviolable will that determines the state of things in conformity with a state of rightness—or of dignity—all the while offering the means for a later elevation.

operative, the collective fluid force is the ☿ (or the ⚲) in regard to the ☉ of a Leader. The hierarchical order of its components is the natural order of the spiritual plane: the worthiest at the top, the merely strongest at the bottom. Here the "dignity" could be congenital in the person, or acquired, or bestowed through consecration or investiture.

The hierarchical recognition is a conscious act in the individual that determines spiritually worthy relationships, independently of common opinion; he who is capable of this immediately recognizes those who are superior to him and subjects himself to them; he also recognizes *himself* as superior to others and has authority over them. Whenever such evaluations are contaminated by considerations of an inferior order, preventing this self-acknowledgment, the hierarchical order is formally established by the Leader.

The Head may pass on his own dignity, and his own powers with it; he may even lose it or change his status in it as soon as somebody else, who is or becomes greater than he, enters to participate in the chain. Then again: the Head of a chain and his members are effectively related to *the* highest spiritual hierarchy.

The entity of a chain that perpetuates itself for generations, through the members of a community or initiatic school, sums up in itself a *tradition*. The light and power of this tradition are not dissolved by any interruption that may occur in the transmission on the physical plane, but they enter into a virtual state; thus, they may be recalled at any time and in any place by those who, possessing the *right* intention, resume the operation according to the rituals, by using the signs and symbols of this tradition.

When several people operate together, the chain is formed if:

— three people form a triangle, with the vertex (occupied by the highest of the three) facing eastward, as they all look in that direction;

— more people form a circle, the center of which is occupied by the highest member, or, if the number is sufficient, by him and two other people who are either chosen or designated beforehand, as they face eastward.

The total number of participants will invariably be *odd;* the number of those who form the circle surrounding the main operators will always be *even*.

There are several ways to form a circle, applied in a particular manner according to the goal and manner of the different operations, and specific to each of them. I will mention some of them here.

If there are women involved, they must be strictly alternated with men.

Those who form the chain must do the following:

— all join hands
  or else avoid any contact with their neighbors;
— all face inside the circle
  or all face outward
  or alternate, one facing inward, one outward;
— remain motionless through the entire operation
  or move in a circle
  either in clockwise
  or counterclockwise fashion;
— change the speed, or remain still and then start up again as the operator instructs.

The double circle is formed in an analogous fashion. Besides what has been said:

— the outer circle may be formed by males, the inner by females, or vice versa;
— the external circle faces outward, the inner circle inward, or vice versa;
— the members of one circle are either in front of the members of the other circle, in relation to the center, or not;
— the movement of the circles is either
  identical
  or going in opposite directions.

The triple circle is formed in a similar manner, with other variations, both in order and in the directions.

The vibration of the chain in its members is triple: in the physical, astral, and spiritual planes, generating particular actions and reactions, causes, means, effects, practices, and operations in each "plane" or "world." The

syntony of vibrations is achieved when all the members of the chain follow an identical regimen, however it may be defined ritually, as well as identical practices, and when they fix the same symbol in their own inner light. This may consist in pronouncing internally and externally (with one's voice, will, and spirit) the ritual formulas, sometimes even following a certain rhythm or singing hymns suitable for the purposes of particular operations. All members must try to evoke in themselves the state of fluid vibration, which is then exalted and potentized through "sympathy."

The purpose of the chains that are ceremonially convened may be a higher illumination of all the participants, or of one of them, or else a practical and contingent realization; or the initiation of a neophyte, on whom the head of the chain bestows states of consciousness through "induction" of the light and the power of the entire chain; or for other reasons.

In order to achieve the ignification of the astral light (see the essay by Abraxas, chapter VI), namely the transformation of ☿ into ☥, some chains use forms of violence (e.g., dervishes, flagellants), while others employ orgiastic forms, or a combination of both.[159] The procedures are analogous to the ones that are practiced by the single individual.

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159. See, for instance, the employment of women and sacrificial rapes in the *chakras* (chains) that practice the secret cult of Kali. In Saudi Arabia, in order to reach a certain degree of exaltation and supreme *fixation,* at the center of chains that are prepared with a crescendo of progressive rhythms and movements of the head and torso, the fluidic vertigo is taken on and dominated by an action of the Head of the chain, who, in a state of absolute lucidity, pierces his body with a sword. Since he is in a state of magical equilibrium, it leaves him unscathed, and shows no signs of entry wounds or blood. (Note by UR)

Leo

The Attitude Toward Initiatic Teaching

The following considerations are addressed to those who not only have *read* what I have explained so far, but who, when confronted with the transmission of teachings, also have *felt and willed.*

In the order of esoteric knowledge, one cannot remain passive before what is received, which is given not for information's sake, but in order to lead others to similar inner achievements. Whatever is communicated, if it is received with the right spiritual attitude, has the power to transform one's essence. Those who overcome an obstacle in this order of things do not do it for their own sake alone; there is an occult bond among human beings that allows others to partake in the spiritual achievements of an individual, even if such a person remains aloof, invisible, and silent. But when the path being followed is expressed through thoughts, this occult and natural process of participation is brought into the light of knowledge and free individuality. Thus it is necessary to learn to receive it in the right way.

One should not react and grasp what is being communicated only with the mind (this is the first obstacle that meets esoteric teachings, and which can arrest and neutralize them all); rather, one's thoughts must generate living images, and these in turn must be *felt.* What I mean is that the state that I have described must be imagined as taking shape in us—almost as if we "invented" it—and at the same time we must possess and maintain a corresponding state of feeling in our *hearts.*

I am not talking about some definite feeling, as usually occurs in ordinary life, but about the pure and simple attitude of *feeling,* of listening with the ear of the heart in inner calmness; this is very different from the emotional, instinctive, and immediate reactions that make people rejoice or suffer as they identify with them and get lost in them. This is a special attitude that has to be practiced. As a starting point, try to remember and

to reproduce through the imagination a certain emotion experienced in given circumstances. Then, try to abstract either these circumstances and the object that occasioned it, or else its definite coloring of pleasure or pain. You will find that something remains—an intense and yet calm emotional state, collected almost as a "warmth" within the heart. This exercise is very important and is not as difficult to practice as it may first seem.

This purified manner of feeling preserves one's freedom before the content of the experience, and at the same time shifts its content from the brain to the more subtle centers. There, the teaching is internalized and appropriated, reemerging in a form similar to the act of *remembering.*[160] The message no longer seems to come from the outside, but seems to arise from inside us, shedding light on and giving value to our inner experiences, the significance of which had eluded us up to that point.

Moreover, it is necessary to have at the same time, and in a distinct fashion, a *willful* attitude within our interiority. But even the will must have a special meaning; it must be independent from every stimulus and every goal. We may compare it to that which one feels while preparing to break a rigid object, the muscular tension preceding the movement itself. Here, too, we may utilize the imagination as in the case of feeling, and abstract from the meaning of an act of will that is recalled either the determining cause that awakened it or else the direction toward which it was addressed. It will also be possible to utilize the memory of the state of energy preceding the discharge in which it was transformed into action and material movement.

The will, when caught in this condition, is experienced as a state that fills *the arms and the lower half of one's body* with life. Through the corresponding attitude, the content of a teaching is received by other subtle centers of our being. The inner experience will be very different from that which I characterized earlier as a "remembering." Here it will instead appear as if a strong current from another source of energy erupted and coupled itself with our own, multiplying it.

Receiving as *thinking* needs to be simultaneously integrated with

160. This experience of "remembering" as the characteristic of a new type of emergence of knowledge is capable of introducing one to the deep and *experiential* meaning of the Platonic doctrine of truth as *anamnesis,* namely as "recollecting." Moreover, the Greek term for "truth," *aletheia,* may be translated as "destruction of forgetfulness."

receiving as *feeling* and with receiving as *willing,* activating centers that in ordinary conditions remain dormant. These are distinct states, although simultaneous.

This may appear difficult. In reality many people can, through practice, attain the state in which one perceives, feels, and wills in three different zones of one's own being; this marks the first emancipation from the laws of the physical world, and a first realization of our unity with the subtle body in the waking state.

All this represents a process of inner development that, once attained, leads to both a complete revision of the attitude toward life and the experience of the sensible world in general. Other evidences arise, other systems of reference. A new discipline in one's life and behavior sets itself up on an entirely new basis; moreover, one's thought begins to form itself, in consequence, as an orientation of knowledge, which takes on the value of a doctrine.

The process is in inverse to that of ordinary life, in which theory precedes practice and experience. Here we first find an inner action, the free initiative that leads to things that are not thought, supposed, or believed, but rather *experienced;* only at a second stage does one formulate a doctrine that is justified and ordered only on the basis of these effective and inner experiences. Esotericism does not require any act of faith. Rather, it requires goodwill and a spirit free of *a priori* assumptions and prejudices—and yet, this is precisely where the difficulty lies. It is useless to discuss this or that, since the basis of a discussion cannot be the same; likewise, in this field it is useless to create conviction solely through discursive argument. Rather, we should try to accept and to operate, and to observe with objectivity whatever ensues from the acceptance and from the action within the inner domains of our being. Thus one's criteria and knowledge will be a result and not a starting point.

It will be useful, further on, to see what each one may conclude in regard to esoteric doctrine on the basis of the lines of experiment that I have described so far. This, however, should not be understood as an *a priori* intellectual view, but rather as an *a posteriori* organization of knowledge.

In this domain, we must avoid ending up in rigid formulas. It is necessary to leave a certain margin of indeterminacy, so that the spirit may flow

and develop a somewhat creative and synthesizing initiative, bringing into action faculties that are left inactive when comprehension is merely through logical schemata. Words must contain something more than what they habitually express, and the attention of the reader or listener must be refined so as to "fix" not only the sense, but also what the sense gradually calls forth as a secret resonance in ourselves. That which is tidily encapsulated in a logical formula is dead for the life of the spirit.

Ea

Freedom, Precognition, and the Relativity of Time

Vir sapiens dominabitur astris.
(The wise man will dominate the stars.)

Is time an intrinsic characteristic of things, and a law of existence from which there is no reprieve? Or is it simply something accidental that compels man to become aware of things and events? And, in the latter case, should we imagine them to be free in themselves from the linear and consecutive law of time?

This problem is not posed here from a philosophical point of view, nor from the perspective of contemporary physics, but rather as it is imposed by a certain class of little-observed and sporadic (though not any less real) phenomena. I am referring to cases of precognition.

These phenomena can be divided in three categories:

1. First of all, there are more or less obscure *sensations* about imminent and totally unexpected events. These sensations often have a *premonitory* character. A friend of mine once decided to travel to a northern Italian town on a certain date. It just so happened that he was seized by the irresistible and inexplicable impulse to leave a day earlier. As he obeyed that impulse, during the trip he experienced a strong sense of anguish that disappeared only once a certain town was left behind. *The following day, the train that he was originally supposed to take crashed in proximity to that town, and many people died or were injured.*

2. Second, there are *predictions*. Some people, who are so-called "lucid," correctly declare that some very unlikely or accidental events are about to happen. An example of this is the absolutely exact prediction of what person, in a crowd, is going to occupy a given seat in a theater. Mere statistical calculations, when rigorously applied to similar predictions, have been

unable to explain this phenomenon, on which weighs an irreducible factor of *improbability.*

3. Third, there are authentic cases of *precognition.* This is the case of the same event *seen* twice, in the present and in the future, in an absolutely identical manner. For example, one of us who served as an officer during the war had the following dream. He was having dinner with his own brother, who was stationed in the town of Vicenza. All of a sudden the light went off three times; this was a signal for incoming enemy planes, *but the dreamer did not know this.* Everyone started to run toward a bunker, across a public square, *which the dreamer had never seen before.* Somebody knocked against the dreamer's brother, who fell. In the darkness, the person in question helped his brother up, and finally both made it to the bunker as the first explosions were already audible. Our friend, strongly impressed by the dream, told it to his comrades and also wrote to an acquaintance in Vicenza to make sure that nothing had happened.

Nothing had happened. However, a few months later, when he happened to be in Vicenza to visit his brother, *everything that he had dreamed of took place, down to the smallest details, as if he had seen the same movie twice.*

Before discussing what these phenomena can tell us concerning the nature of time, we must further distinguish three views of time itself. Time may be conceived in the following ways:

a) Creatively: as free becoming, or as a current that produces facts that did not exist before and which do not obey any law of necessity; their order is time itself.
b) As the flow of consecutive events, which can be entirely explained on the basis of necessary and sufficient causal conditions.
c) As the simple, irreversible, and linear order of the contents of human experience.

It is evident that phenomena such as we have described are incompatible with the first view of time: foresight implies predetermination, and predetermination excludes contingency, which is characteristic of a free and creative spontaneity. Their compatibility with the second view depends on whether or not there is a possibility of connecting foresight to a *knowledge of the causes,* in which supposedly reside the genus of what necessity will unfailingly produce.

However, we must consider that in precognitive phenomena there is no knowledge of causes; there is nothing inferential or intellectual about cognition, as in the case of scientific predictions. Rather, cognition is given in the form of a more or less direct *perception,* and, in the third group of these phenomena, in the form of a *vision* of a future event. However, this difficulty could be overcome by imagining that the event is in the causes just as the idea of a building, which is about to be built, exists in the mind of its architect. In that case, the prediction could be explained in terms of some sort of visualized perception of this idea, which has happened through contact with a supersensible context. Likewise, on the human plane, a person may telepathically perceive that which somebody else has in mind and wishes to carry out.

All the same, we must admit that under these considerations we can grant a certain character of reality to time only on condition of not adopting from the outset a radical, deterministic perspective, identifying the possible with the real. In fact, an idea is distinguished from reality only due to the fact that it remains a "possibility," namely something that may also not be, which may or may not be realized. Were this not so, there would be no difference whatsoever between the vision of the idea (i.e., the vision-idea perceived in the causes) and the vision of the corresponding fact. In that case, it would be as if the future event itself could be seen; or as if it were already present. In that case, the interval of becoming that separates the future from the present would be a sheer illusion and a merely human mirage. In other words, the future *will* not *be:* it already is. These are the logical consequences we have to draw if an *absolute* and accurate precognition were possible in every case.

Man is a *cognitive* being, and as such this eventuality should hardly bother him; it should rather cheer him up, since he would then be able to overcome the law of time that limits his horizon to the narrow prison of the present. He would also enjoy the possibility of floating above the past and the future, thus partaking of the omniscience and extra-temporality attributed to a divine eye. This is the fascination of the gift or power of *prophetic knowledge,* for we cannot designate that knowledge otherwise which, on an initiatic plane, corresponds to the sporadic extra-normal faculty at work in the common phenomena of precognition.

But besides existing as a cognitive being, man is also, and above all, a

being who *acts*. This complicates matters. In fact, the reality of time is connected to a large degree to the reality of *freedom* and to the value of action. If every future event can be known and even *seen*, this means at least that it is predetermined; however, if there is freedom, there must be some indetermination in the future that depends on the faculty to freely choose and to act, in other words to bring about what otherwise would not be, or not to bring about that which otherwise would be. If we take away this condition and nullify the reality of time and becoming, then the striving, acting, fighting, and the alleged power of human beings to create or transform reality would all merely be appearances connected to a state of intoxication and illusion before some kind of *absolute space*, before a world of things and events that never were, nor will be, nor cease to be, but simply ARE, unchanging.

Everyone can see the seriousness of the question, and the necessity of carefully examining all the factors before making up our minds about it. And yet this is not easy. People do not like to believe in what does not soothe them; moreover, they are naturally inclined to give priority to their feelings and prejudices over facts. Thus, concerning this matter, many people are inclined to "reason" along these lines: "We have the *feeling* of freedom, *therefore* it is not possible to have a real vision of the future"; and: "Human beings *must* be morally responsible for their actions, *therefore* the future cannot (i.e., we are not allowing it to) be predetermined." But reality could not care less about human feelings and wishes. What is must be judged by the data of experience and not by one's impressions and feelings of what "must be." Only after facing with a calm gaze that which is can one take action in order to change what can eventually be changed.

Having said this, let us examine in more detail the three categories in which we have classified the phenomena of foresight. It is easy to see how the first one, concerning the true *premonitions* and *forebodings*, leaves an ample margin to freedom. In many instances, these warnings that come to people in an extra-normal way help them to take certain actions when confronted by events that would otherwise be violent or fatal. The case of the trip that was providentially anticipated as a result of an intuition clearly points to this possibility.

In the case of the two other categories, the difficulty increases. However, one may raise a general objection. True, there are correct premonitions:

but there are also many others that do not come to pass. Should we understand this as a mere error due to an imperfect visionary faculty in people, thus admitting that what had wrongly been foreseen could also have been accurately foreseen? This is one possible interpretation. Yet there is another one: we may suppose that many "wrong" premonitions were accurate at first, corresponding to a more probable sequence of causes (perhaps with prevision of their effects), and thus liable to produce that effect in the normal course of events. Such premonitions *became* "false" only later on, due to the intervention or unforeseen awakening of other causes.

If this is true, then there is still room for freedom. Whether or not this is so could even in some cases be verified in an experimental fashion. Even in the limiting case that is not a prediction, but a prevision of the future event that is not announced but previously *seen*, with myself acting in this way or that, it would be necessary that at the moment of the occurrence of the event I was overcome by total amnesia, so as to follow automatically the course of events. But if all of a sudden I remembered and knew: "What I have previously seen is happening right now," in many cases one could also *intervene* and try to bring about a *different* outcome. And if one succeeded in doing so, even to a small degree, the thesis of an absolute fatalism would be avoided, since the *power to falsify* one's precognition was demonstrated.[161]

There are other cases to be considered, namely those in which it was possible to foresee the event not because it necessarily had to happen, but rather for the opposite reason. It was the fact that it was foreseen that determined it, thus actualizing the foresight. In a trivial context, this often happens due to suggestion. After placing blind faith in certain individuals who are known to foresee the future, how many people have fallen victim to self-suggestion, thus causing the events foretold to come true?

But this may occur in a wider and more important context. In some instances the precognition, instead of a seeing, is a real predetermining act, the arranging of the causes for the event in question. Obviously, this falls outside the boundaries of ordinary life and within the context of some

161. We should still consider cases in which what is done to prevent a certain prophecy from coming true may also lead to its fulfillment. See, for instance, various tales or ancient legends, the most famous of which is that of Oedipus. However, this is not the above-mentioned case, which presupposes knowledge *at the moment* of the occurrence of the foreseen event.

type of magic. I will mention only one example, that of the *auspices* and *auguries* that played an important role in ancient Roman life. From many testimonies it is undoubtedly true that the practice of auspices and auguries often had the meaning of a ritual of magical predetermination: it was not a matter of seeing some fatal events before they happened, but rather of *determining beforehand certain fatal events.*

In many other cases, it is true this was otherwise, and yet we should not forget that the purpose of the ancient Roman art of auguries was not to announce beforehand (as if to satisfy a vain curiosity) what in any event was bound to happen, but rather to point to a body of circumstances and connections in order to direct *action* in an opportune and *propitious* (Latin *felix,* a Roman technical term) way. Thus, this action was regarded as possible and real, and only because of that—for a practical purpose—did the Romans, all the way up to the political and military leaders, attribute so much importance to the auspices.[162]To use a modern image, the responses were like weather patterns that meteorological stations communicate to people who intend to attempt a mountain climb: what is forecasted are certain atmospheric conditions, propitious or otherwise (*faustae* [auspicious] or *infaustae* [inauspicious,] according to the ancient Latin terminology), and with an objective character fully independent of the climbers. It is up to them whether or not they take these forecasts into account.[163]

These considerations lead us to indicate the limits that must be put to the concept of freedom, even for those who assert its reality. Here we may recall what several modern researchers (i.e., Geley and Osty) have positively established, namely that the fulfillment of predictions has a preciser character, the more they concern external or collective events, or events

162. This is evident in the Chinese oracle known as the *I Ching.* The oracle does not refer to events but to fluid situations or to embryonic events, so to speak, helping a person to take them into account and to act prudently, before events may occur and force one in a certain direction.

163. The situation, after all, is the same in the case of *astrology,* which falls within the same type of sciences. Astrology, too, posits the problem of the degree to which the future is predetermined. There is a well-known saying in astrology: *astra inclinant non determinant* (the stars incline, they do not determine). This means that outlines of the events most likely to happen are predetermined, even though in principle we should not exclude the possibility of a "deflecting" intervention.

connected to material passions and interests, or finally, to use a term that may not mean much, "fortuitous" events. It is evident that one should not look for freedom where it is not to be found (at least as long as we are limited human beings). There is obviously a sphere subject to fatality or contingence, inherited in toto by each of us as soon as we come into the world, just as all the risks and contingencies associated with the sea are accepted when a person decides to undertake a voyage and finally boards a ship. Thus no man can reasonably expect to claim freedom and the power to change things as concerns death and diseases, being struck by lightning, being at the center of an earthquake, or being in a war. These are all things that fall within the parameters of the human or, if one prefers, the earthly adventure. There is nothing strange about the fact that precognitions are possible in regard to these matters. In this case, the issue of freedom shifts from the material to the transcendental plane as we will explain below.

Second, the overwhelming majority of people are so enslaved to habits, cravings, instincts, and fixed reactions, they are such slaves to things and to their own selves, that it would truly be surprising not to be able to forecast their future. Knowing the so-called "character" of a person, we can already know in an approximate way what he or she will do in certain circumstances. And since many circumstances depend very little on people, all the elements of a prediction are virtually already present. In many cases the faculty of forecasting is that of being able to read into the soul of another person, in that deep and subterranean area in which secret and unspoken desires reside, as well as forces that may totally escape ordinary consciousness, though at the proper time their effects will emerge.[164]

In this context one can see that the real question is not whether one is free from events that may or may not occur in the future, but rather whether one is free from one's self, and if so, to what degree. Even in this regard one should avoid the abstract framing of problems in terms of simple alternatives, but rather posit the problem of freedom in reference to individual cases and single planes. Moreover, one should also move from the theoretical plane to the practical one and instead of asking the question: "*Are*

164. Thus, in modern researches, some people have tried to explain predictions on a "psychoanalytical" basis, namely by referring to the subconscious of the subjects to whom the prediction applies. This would be legitimate in some cases, provided that psychoanalysis had any notion of that which is truly the "subconscious."

we free or not?" ask instead: "May *we become* free? And if so, to what degree and how?"

The problem of freedom in respect to one's self, rather than in respect to the world of natural necessities that surrounds us, is very complex. If we just limited ourselves to empirical data in regard to the phenomena of precognition, a character of mere probability emerges whenever the forecasts concern a deeper plane of life, a realm of serious decisions in which the whole person is engaged. From a human perspective, this would reveal a certain margin of indetermination that will be wider the more such decisions are taken by an individual who knows how to dominate himself.

From a higher perspective we cannot stop here, because another problem emerges, namely the metaphysical problem of the predestination of one's self. Nobody is born without certain tendencies, which according to esoteric doctrine are not accidental or restricted to mere biological and hereditary factors. Moreover, it is not by chance that one is born in a given place, as a member of a given race, at a certain time, and so on. Obviously this doctrine is related to the doctrine of the soul's preexistence (which should not be confused with the mistaken belief in reincarnation). According to this doctrine, which has an initiatic character and was known both in the East and in the ancient West, the Self not only preexists the human individuality, but also determines the nature and general meaning of its earthly manifestation, namely the particular life that it is going to live. How this determination occurs and to what degree absolute freedom is to be found in it are issues that must be left undecided, for the very reason that the problem may differ from individual to individual. To be sure, there is a moment, outside of time, in which the Self is the *Lord of birth;* this is the point that determines what the Hindu tradition calls the "causal body" and what the ancient West called the "daimon" (in a special meaning of the term). This body/daimon condenses, so to speak, the "fatal" and prenatal element out of which a particular finite existence will unfold. This casts a new light on what in many cases makes the phenomena of precognition possible.

Now, if a man lives the life that the Self has properly chosen for itself, or has been led to choose, we can see that the thesis of freedom may be as correct as that of necessity, depending on the point of view. From a merely human point of view, namely from that of the individuated Self (as opposed to that

of the individuating Self), we must keep in mind that in almost every case *desire* is the instrumental force that determines birth and that continues to act in the life it has chosen. Desire is the opposite of the "steady state" of *being* and of knowledge (see the translated text from the Kulârnava Tantra in chapter III); it is yearning for something else, being moved by something else, shifting from one object to another, turning from one state to another, as a result of being either attracted to (i.e., identifying with) or rejected by something or someone. The origin and fundament of the human experience of *time* is no different. For a being who does not crave or strive toward something, and who does not desire (not only in the ordinary subjective sense, but in the deeper and metaphysical sense as well), there would not be an experience of time, or at least there would be the experience of a different time altogether. Things take on the aspect of temporality in virtue of being absorbed into the deep thrust of life; they are situated in time, and the world itself appears as a becoming, just as to passengers inside a train the countryside appears to be flying by and transforming in various scenes one after the other.

Thus it seems that time is not a substantial mode of things. It intervenes necessarily and imposes its law only on the plane of a given form of experience that is defined by "desire." When the various potentialities of the life that the Self has chosen for itself are actualized on the basis of desire, not only does the meaning of such life become elusive, but everything unfolds as in a state of dreaming or sleepwalking. It is only in rare instances that this state will be interrupted, in moments of *insight* and *recollection* in which the Self assumes again its active function as the center, presiding *over* and directing the fateful elements of its earthly life. Mereshkowsky, in his book on Napoleon, used the very proper expression of *remembering the future* (though he may not have fully understood its meaning), in relation to the capability of some exceptional people to intuit in a very clear manner what is going to happen, and to choose invariably the right course of action that will generate a whole set of circumstances. We could not better express the sense of those moments of awakening during which there reemerges in the Self the state of the "Lord of the birth," and thus of the subject of transcendental freedom.

Such a perspective is amplified on the path of initiation and of high asceticism, since the latter is necessarily the way in which this type of

eternalization of consciousness occurs. Wherever the basic condition of "desire" is overcome, and thereby the object is purified from an object of desire into an object of *contemplation,* the overcoming of the temporal condition ensues naturally (though in different degrees). I am referring here to the *liberation of the self and of the object* and thus to the possibility of capturing in a synthetic way (i.e., in the synthesis of its profound meaning) what ordinary consciousness would regard as events analytically arranged along a temporal series, as a mere sequence of "facts" or events more or less endured, and confused acts of the "will."

When light is shed on such horizons and an eye opens that is not merely human, it does not necessarily follow that life ends and action ceases. Rather, this is the moment when one may become supremely active and realize the human experience according to the goal one has chosen for oneself. This realization occurs without confusing the role being played with the actor performing it, or the individual subject with the detached Self who, without acting, directs the course of actions (i.e., the *purusha* of Samkya philosophy).[165] The experience of time itself then assumes another quality, and almost moves into another dimension. It is no longer a "chronological time," nor "becoming" or "flowing," but rather a *rhythmic* time, which is not indifferent to what goes on within it, but rather restores itself in terms of an organic development, in which an intimate connection of meaning links the Self and its experience, rendering the separate contents as integral parts of a whole that then produces the *meaning* of that life. It will be apparent after a little reflection how things are, in this case, in regard to the capability of foreseeing future events; it is easy to see that here the precognitive power does not jeopardize freedom, but that the opposite is true,[166] in the sense that the Self becomes central with respect to the causes of what will take place.

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165. In reference to this, see the initiatic expression, easy enough to grasp: "He who no longer has a daimon."

166. Those who merely looked at appearances could sometimes have the impression that the opposite is true, since in an integrated life everything that is random, accidental, and arbitrary, and which as such could leave some margin to a more or less insignificant and illusory freedom, is gradually limited; in that case, everything appears to obey its own logic, law, and meaning; just as in the development of a musical piece, in which every particular element, including the apparent dissonances and variations, converge in various ways in the overall development.

When we think the problem through, we may ask whether at this point we can find the power to make the future unfold in one certain way rather than in another. In absolute terms we must answer in the affirmative; but from the point of view of the Self who is involved in the earthly experience, this would amount to being in contradiction with itself, or to want something other than what it originally wanted, almost like someone who has begun to weave a certain pattern and all of a sudden decides to stop or to begin an altogether different one. Again, still in absolute terms, we do not see what could prevent a "detached" Self from contradicting itself, if it so pleases. But this is a theoretical extreme, and it is senseless to consider it from a practical point of view. The incoherence that one may encounter (as all too often is the case) concerns a far more inferior plane; it is to this incoherence, at best, that the "freedom" in ordinary life is reduced, which is then used to disintegrate it and deprive it of every deeper meaning, within the limits that the world of necessity allows it.[167]

Summing up: in regard to time, in supreme knowledge there certainly cannot be any. In this knowledge, events do not "become," but ARE. This is true in regard to their being events in an absolute sense, and not events that concern the life of a given acting subject. From this second, contingent point of view, they are mere possibilities; only those that the Self elects and wills when it assumes a given form and destiny become actualized. The order of this actualization constitutes the temporal series, which is lived in either an active or a passive fashion. In both cases, time will always have a relative character. Thus, of the three views of time that I outlined at the beginning of this essay, the third one appears to be the correct one, both from the common human perspective and from the exceptional perspective of one who has become the active subject of his own destiny: time is a mere form of earthly experience and has no foundation in the world of Reality.

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167. We may add that the condition of modern man has been determined along this path. Overall, he no longer knows what he is, what he wants, or the meaning of what he is doing, since his inner unity has broken down into contradictory and opposing forces; their sphere of action is very limited in regard to "fateful" factors that, in this case, act in the sense of determinism and brutal necessity.

Commentary on the *Opus Magicum*

Those who are involved in preliminary practices aimed at achieving "detachment" need to realize that, in the overwhelming majority of cases, they must expect the appearance of intermediate negative stages, characterized by a suspension of "spontaneous" activity. These are partial manifestations of what constitutes the Hermetic *black* (nigredo) state, and in general, the critical point of "initiatic death." However, the plane to which I now turn is that of the individual faculties.

Let us take the case of a person who is used to creative writing. Writing, in most cases, is not something that depends entirely on us. We all know how many times, when trying to come up with some ideas, we just sat there, unable to write anything, while, on the contrary, when sitting at the desk with an empty head, we may have experienced the flow of creative energy that takes us even farther than where we originally intended to go. This margin of *grace* is found just about everywhere in the course of ordinary life, during which human beings *receive more gifts* than they realize.

When taking up initiatic techniques, it may happen that a person's spontaneous faculty of writing will gradually disappear or become diminished; a certain state of inner rigidity may occur, resulting in the inability to write anything at all. This is the dead point. But as long as one does not give up, remains calm, and proceeds, one will notice a gradual reemergence of the lost or diminished faculty. At this point this faculty may acquire another meaning and the person may really claim it as *his own*. He will master it, and be able to exercise it at any time, at will, unlike the previous state. Moreover, when writing, there will no longer be a sort of waiting for something to come from outside, followed by identification, a hesitation, an attempt to follow some direction until a new "inspiration" and the production of thought-associations set in. Instead of all this, an active lucidity will preside over the entire process.

The same is true for other faculties: it is a suspension and then a reactivation truly from within, from the substance of the Self. Everything that the Self received as a gift from "nature" in the form of spontaneity at first abandons the Self, but then returns as something that really belongs to its substance. Thus, analogous modifications may also be manifested for thought in general. A particular instance of this concerns *memory.* Very often one reaches a point where remembering one's self is virtually impossible. But then a new form of memory sets in, which is no longer mechanical or accidental as the ordinary one was. Another characteristic instance is that of the spoken word. It is not as though one becomes mute: but to express oneself with words becomes difficult; the words are blocked from within. However, the word that returns from beyond the dead end is almost another type of word: it is a word that reflects something of the character of the *living word* or magical word. Even from a physical perspective, Yoga treatises mention a clearing and the assuming of another tone and strength in one's voice, as a result of following certain practices.

One should not fail to realize all this, especially in order to avoid judging the negative states in the wrong light, so as not to be alarmed and discouraged.

I will add that this phenomenology occurs above all in an autonomous discipline, which is pursued in the context of ordinary life, without the intervention of proper ritual practices.

XI

Iagla
Serpentine Wisdom

They burn with fire—we burn with water;
they wash with water—we wash with fire.

—Van Helmont

Occultism[168] has an extremely subtle "virtue." It is "serpentine." And it is also essential.

People in general have their clichés, their ethical, religious, or social ideals, their opinions about Strength, Wisdom, and Greatness. But all in all, *occultism* is a very different thing. It is elusive and cannot be measured. It comes from the opposite direction from the one everyone is looking toward. Thus it goes unnoticed; or if it is noticed, it disconcerts. It robs of their certainties those who thought they were secure, who thought they had their feet on the ground.

The occultist is a being who cannot be measured by ordinary standards. Nobody knows what he is really capable of, nor what his action consists of. His path is impenetrable. You may be his best friend, his companion, and even his lover; you may think you own his heart, his affection, or his devotion. And yet, he will be an *other,* besides the one you already know. You will become aware of this "other" one only when you enter his domain. Then you will feel as if you had been walking along the edge of an abyss.

Never mind the fact that today in the West there are countless people who declare themselves to be occultists, Masters, Initiates, etc., and would be very displeased if one were not aware of their presumed quality. Let me say again that, with some remarkable exceptions, it is rare for a true initiate to come forward and to reveal himself outside his own circle. The real

168. Let us allow Iagla to use the term "occultism," much as we would have preferred to avoid it, considering what "occultism" means these days. We could not come up with a better term, because it is not a question here of the pure type of the Adept but only of a few particular traits of his action, for which, as one can see, Iagla draws especially upon the Far Eastern tradition.

initiate lives in a state that categorically *destroys* any dependency on people. What the latter say or think about him, and whether the opinion they form of him is accurate or not—these things no longer concern him. Due to an "irresistible" inclination, people want others to "know" who they are (worse yet, what they *think* they are). When they act, they also want everyone else to know about it; the absence of reactions and a natural impassibility in the face of an unjust comment or action are not typical of them. An occultist finds all this to be puerile. He *does not exist*. Let others try to grasp air, if that is what they enjoy. He can pull the rug from under their feet, and he will do it when the occasion arises, without them even realizing from where the action arose or even if there *was* an action at all. Do they wish to strike him on the cheek? Let them. He will even turn the other one: he plays only those games in which he is the one dictating *all* the rules. He is at the mercy of nobody. He alone decides what reactions must arise in himself due to other people's words, actions, or qualities. Call him a hero, call him a coward: he does not care either way. He is only concerned with what effects follow these thoughts of others, what their consequences are for his game. He cares only to make some things *occur*: he calmly and coolly establishes the means and the conditions, he acts, and that is all. He does not adhere to his action as if it were his *own*. Above all he does not talk about it, nor does he care about the outcome. The action is a mere instrument. He is immune from the mania of "self-affirmation."

The more an occultist progresses, the more deeply his center recedes and the more those upon whom he acts will have the perfect illusion of being free. I do not know how well known this characteristic of occultism is these days. It does not help for it to be known; it is better unnoticed. However, I know that too often in the West occultism is distorted by alien views and by profane prejudices. People *know* little and talk much. Thus the chance for mistakes and misunderstandings is great. Yet we should not give any support to those who do not even know where the true principles lie, and for whom occultism is just another excuse for games and manias that they divert the public with. In this volume we have often referred to the "will," "action," and the "Self." The authors of these essays know what they mean by these concepts. But I am not sure if our readers understand that here will is not will, action is not action, and the Self is not the Self.

About twenty-five hundred years ago, a small book was written in China.

In this book, the principles of a *subtle* and *Hermetic* wisdom are set forth in a clear, cool, and lucid form: I am talking of course about Lao-tzu's *Tao-te Ching*. It may be helpful to recall here the main themes of this practical wisdom, which is timeless and boundless. It is an unequivocal reference point. It is very dangerous, yet absolute. I do not know of anything more absolute than it. It has a sense of *surgery*. An essential transparency. No echo of human limitations and manias. There, one can breath and fully *be*.

Although it may be based in legend, Confucius's encounter with Lao-tzu, narrated by Cho-Hong in the *Si Sien Chuen,* is very meaningful. According to Cho-Hong, Confucius, who tried to involve Lao-tzu in his preoccupation with customs, morality, and tradition, received such answers from him that, when reflecting several years later on this encounter, he wrote: "It is possible to set a trap in order to catch animals; it is possible to catch fishes with nets and to catch birds with arrows. But how will one capture the dragon that flies in the air above the clouds?"

This is how the maxims of the *Tao-te Ching* gradually define the nature of the Fulfilled One, the Ambiguous, the Subtle, the Elusive. The text begins in this manner[169]: "The Way that is the Way is not the ordinary way. The Name that is the Name is not the ordinary name." Men *steal* life; they are outside the center and draw outside of it the virtues that should remain deep and invisible. They construct the puppet of "personality," instead of *being;* then they grasp it, clamped on and tenacious as beasts. They accumulate, absorb, clutch, and "affirm" ad infinitum: Me! Me! Me! The mask, the grimace become everything. They do not realize that this is fever, error, mania. *Death* lies in wait within the shell they erected. And death cuts them down. They are larvae ejected from the Great Game.

This is what the Fulfilled One says: true affirmation, absolute individuality are not the affirmation or the individuality known to men; rather, the latter is a way of illusion and corruption. People talk about possessing, and know not what possession is. They talk about "strength," but what they refer to is a mere fable. The Fulfilled One says: only by losing itself can the Self *become individualized,* ceasing to "affirm" in order to really be *individuals and Lords of the Self.* One cannot *have* while hanging on; one cannot become sharper by grasping. The Fulfilled One disappears—thus

169. The English version here follows closely that used by Iagla, which comes from J. Evola, ed., *Il libro della Via e della Vita di Laotze,* Carabba, Lanciano, 1921. (Editor's note)

he reveals; he empties himself—thus he achieves absolute being. In order to reach the peak, he conceals his Self. By giving away, he earns; by giving away he is rich. He lets go, dissolves, and ascends. He lets go of the ray, abolishes splendor, and *fixes* himself in the invisible origin. Concentrated, he achieves—scattered, he fails. From fullness he shifts to "emptiness." There lies the essence of fullness, just as in the center lies the essence of the wheel. From movement he goes to what, as the real cause of motion, is itself motionless. From being, to that which, in its incorporeity, is nonbeing. "Self," "non-Self," "will"—all manias! Earnings become a loss. He who stands on his toes does not grow taller, nor is walking a random jerking of the legs. He who puts himself in the spotlight remains in the dark; he who thinks he has arrived finds himself pushed back; to show oneself is to be dependent; to take care of oneself is to decay; to make efforts is useless, insane, and takes one even farther from the path. The more he "affirms" and the more he goes outside, the more he affirms nothingness.

Unless you quit the game of resistance, of ownership, of *your* will, you will not cease to be fooled: the Path is something else. To will without willing to will; to act without willing to act; to achieve without doing; to do without being the doer; to elevate oneself without dominating. Straight but flexible, clear though not shining—this is what Lao-tzu says. To truly be consists in not *wishing* to be. Lao-tzu turns all human "values" upside down. He smiles at you, as if you were a little child, when you wear the mask of the "conqueror," the "superman," or of him who "breaks but does not bend." How naive! He says about water: there is nothing in the world like water, ready to assume any form—and yet nothing is more capable of defeating what is strong and rigid. Water cannot be tamed because it adapts itself to all things; because it offers no resistance, it cannot be captured. The "virtue" of Heaven imitates it. The flexible triumphs over the rigid, and the weak triumphs over the strong. The tools of death are strong and hard; the tools of life are subtle and flexible. The former are below, the latter are above. The latter direct the former; the bodiless penetrates matter's impenetrability.

Those who expose themselves create a chance to be stricken down. The strong tree is cut down. . . . Failing is occasioned by "willing," loss is made possible by attachment; there is no action that does not provoke a reaction. Thus, a good wrestler does not use violence; a good winner does not struggle; a good walker leaves no traces; a good director does not direct; a

good guard does not need locks; a good capturer does not use ropes. A truly winning army does not need to "fight"—it has never even considered the struggle or the possibility of having to struggle. See how bewildering all this is? Against this you cannot find a hold, you find no resistance although you feel a force against which you can do nothing, a force that first of all takes away the possibility of a struggle, because a sword cannot strike air, and a net cannot catch water. Those who have been "bitten by the Dragon" possess this strength: they direct worldly affairs through this strength, operating with it, remaining invisible and silent behind the scenes. To them people are nothing (just as people are nothing to the impersonal powers of nature): they employ them like instruments—says Lao-tzu—without experiencing love or hatred, good or ill. Does a builder behave any differently toward the stones he employs? The infinitely wide square no longer has corners; the infinitely wide container is bottomless; the infinitely acute sound is no longer audible; the infinitely wide image no longer has a form. This is the teaching of Lao-tzu. The lack of traces is the trace of his Perfect One. In the immensity of the strength of his spirit, compared to the limited consciousness of human beings, he appears to hardly know he exists. In the guise of weakness, he has true strength; he knows he is powerful and yet appears weak. He knows he is enlightened and yet appears small and mediocre. He dulls what is sharp, clarifies what is confused, tones down his shining nature, and is outwardly identical with what is ordinary. He progresses without advancing; he absorbs without conquering; he has without owning. Becoming like everybody else, he becomes different from everybody. As he goes on, he is as prudent as one who crosses a winter stream; vigilant as one who knows he is surrounded by enemies; cold as a stranger; ephemeral as a melting snowflake; rough as a tree trunk; wide as the great valleys; impenetrable as deep water; inaccessible as solitary peaks. He arrives without walking; he penetrates without looking; achieves without willing; acts without doing; he just vanishes. He is obeyed without commanding; he wins without struggling; he draws people to himself without calling for them. How disheartening to those who uphold the myth of manhood based on muscles and metallic strength: this alone is the *true* man, the *absolute* man! He absorbs within himself the ambiguous virtue of the female. Lao-tzu talks about the invisible magic of the feminine, which in a feline fashion attracts and absorbs in itself man's action; and he

compares it to the image of dark, hidden valleys, drawing to themselves in an irresistible way the water of the alpine peaks.

"The Way that is the Way is not the ordinary way," indeed. Do you know what your "heroes," your "martyrs," and your "men of character" are? Creatures of *vanity,* and nothing more. "I break but do not bend": what you mean is that for the sake of the "beautiful gesture" and for the proud satisfaction, I feed my ego, I sacrifice *reality.* What a child! Lao-tzu does not hide behind the smoke screen of the "heroic" and the "tragic." Being cool and lucid, he only cares to *fulfill.* You advance? He pulls back and then returns like the wave: "It is better to step back a foot than to gain an inch: among two combatants, the one who wins is the one who does not fight." Do you put forth an obstacle, or an "affirmation?" He lets you go ahead, goes underground, and cuts you down at the root. He anticipates that which is not yet manifest; acts upon that which is still weak; resolves a crisis before it erupts. He withdraws; he aims at acting where there are no conditions or defenses, where there is no "cause"—in other words, where there is nothing against which an effect may react.

Lao-tzu says: people do not know what *action* is. Today we have the religion of "effort," "becoming," "action." What matters is not to arrive, but to "aim at the infinite," the "struggle," the "eternal aspiration." Men need action in order to be *aware* of themselves, rather than to *attain.* The more they are caught, excited, and carried away, the happier they are. Thus they *feel* more, because naturally they *need* to "feel themselves" . . . What a disaster, the day they no longer encounter *resistance!* They would burst like the soap bubbles they are. *And this is exactly what happens at death,* when the solid casing that helped them to "reflect" their consciousness is broken; then the knot is untied and is dissolved into the infinite ether, in which there is no support or direction, namely into the dragon's domain.

To level out, to be silent, to disappear; the voice without words; sight without objects; possession without touch; action without movement. This is the way of the Tao. Is it a paradox? A nonsense? These are just words, swarming around the royal elephant like tiny flies. But you, who want to reach the other bank of the river, pay attention to what Lao-tzu says: "Just as the fish could not live if it left the dark abysses, likewise the ordinary person cannot know the weapon of this wisdom of the Lord."

Luce

Invocations

A Complement to the Instructions Concerning Ceremonial Magic Given in Chapter VII

In the system of rituals and practices that are part of Ceremonial Magic, invocations or prayers play an important if not a preponderant role, since they accompany every act that is performed; in and of themselves, they often constitute real ritual forms.

Let us remember what has been said on other occasions by several writers and hinted at in this book: prayer does not consist in the mere movement of the lips and in the utterance of words, but rather in an act that is sometimes voluntary and cerebral (when the operation is limited to actions on the physical and astral planes, or on beings occupying a lower hierarchical place), but, more often than not, eminently spiritual (when it is addressed to higher Beings, in order to receive from them help, illumination, dignification).

Considering the purpose of this preliminary Ritual, namely to elevate the soul beyond the barriers and the bonds of physical nature and thus to put it in direct contact with the Spirits whose body is light and splendor, the verbal expression must be brought to its peak performance with maximal efficacy and it must be vivified with "fire and spirit." This is brought about through constant aspiration.

The oration is not generically determined in time or space. When reciting it, one does not need instruments or signs. Moreover, it is not necessary always to employ the same formula, since this could turn into a mechanical habit (except in special cases where it is necessary, as in the system of Rituals and for magical chains).

The invocations that I will give may serve as a general scheme on which the operator can improvise in the course of the ritual, or *also* repeat them literally, reading them, or, better, memorizing them, as long as paying at-

tention to the reading or memorization does not detract from the spiritual intensity of the invocation itself.

Usually, all invocations need to be performed while standing up, facing eastward, sometimes staring at the magic mirror.

[before an ablution]

Before bathing according to the ablution ritual, concentrate in the spirit, lay your hands on the water, and say:

— *Numen of the deep sea; Numen who with your power dominate all the waters spread throughout the world; I invoke you and call you, who arise and calm the storms, you, the Lord of clear springs and pure streams, you who rule the subterranean waters and the heavenly waters and who distribute everywhere the element that is life to the universe and to the creatures who live in it. And I call you, Daimons and Genii, who are the ministers of his power, to bestow virtue on this water, so that I may be made pure and worthy of performing the ritual of elevation.*

[before the meal]

When you have prepared what you need for your meal and laid out everything you need at the table, turn eastward before eating, and with your thumb pointed toward the ground draw the sign of the Father (which is the sign found on page 194). As you concentrate in the spirit, lay your hands over the food and say:

— *Father, supreme cultivator of the mystical fields, I consecrate to you this food, which is the worthy fruit of the earth. I invoke your presence so that it may nourish in me my own substance, and so that in the process of transformation it may communicate a new strength and value to the mind and to the soul, so that the spirit may quickly rise and attain perfect communion.*

[before getting dressed]

Prior to donning the linen vestment that you will use in the ritual, concentrate in the spirit and say:

— *O Most High, I am wearing the immaculate vestment that is the symbol of my purity. I beseech you, let purity remain within me and shine with your light and with your help.*

[consecration of the room]

Upon entering the room you have chosen to perform the ritual in, and in which the necessary objects are already laid out, face eastward, concentrate in the spirit and say:

— *O Great Unknown, I come to this place that has been isolated from worldly noises in order to know your mystery. I consecrate this room to you, and everything that is in it. Thus, I am ready to light the unquenchable lamp and the fire that is the symbol of my burning spirit. My spirit raises its perfume up to you, as the yearning for knowledge rises toward the mystery, so that you may be manifested to me.*

[consecration of fire]

As you remain concentrated in the spirit, first light the lamp and then, with its flame, ignite the coals. Then say:

— *Infinite power permeating the universe and all beings, Most High in the heavens, Lord of the deep abyss, soul of the world, soul of being, Genii of the flame, Daimons of fire, Entities who wander in space, Intelligences who generate life, I invoke and call out to you all: be present and let your virtue be transmitted to the ardor that I arouse and invoke, that it may remain in me now and forever—Flame,* FLAME: *burn!*

[consecration of perfumes]

Take a little bit of perfume, throw it on the burning coals, hold high above them the vessel containing the perfume, and say:

— *O Supreme, to Thee I consecrate these aromas that, burning, rise in the air, as my being, burning with the sacred flame of the spirit and purified, rendered whole in its elements, rises toward Thee. O potent one, I invoke Thee, that Thy virtue may descend upon me, that Thou shouldest grant that wherever this flame and this perfume burn, these shall be the strength of the sanctified spirit, nor shall adverse shades dare to disturb it. And You, Spirits of the elements, Genii, and Entities, I call You, worthy Ministers of the most high Lord, to be present and let this air be the material of your appearance to the senses.*

After saying that, blow twice with long breaths on the fire.

[consecration of signs]

Draw the ritually prescribed signs. Having done that, throw more perfume on the fire and say:

— *Father, according to Thy law, which dominates the universe and every being, I have drawn these signs, in the Name of the Spirit, the Unknown, and the Operation. My will and my aspiration are in them. May they lead me, with Thy help, to the knowledge that I strive to attain.*

[invocation]

Throw more perfume on the fire, and as you remain concentrated in the spirit, look eastward, then south, west, and north; blow four times in these directions, three times for each direction, slowly and with force, almost hissing. Before each breath, inhale as deeply as you can. When you exhale, invoke in the spirit the Genius, still unknown to you, who presides over that direction. Having done that, turn eastward, and, while keeping the right thumb toward the ground and the other fingers clasped, say:

— *O Unknown, Supreme Master, who guides the secret destinies of the Sacred Temple, I invoke you. Be favorable to me, and let your strong arm be my help; protect me and defend me against the dangers of my inferior nature and against all the forces that can oppose the fulfillment of my aspirations.*

O Infinite, who shines eternally, crowned with flames and living harmonies, Spirit of Light and of Wisdom, you give life to all things with Your Breath, Spirit of Spirits, eternal soul of souls, unchanging breath of life. In you are found the golden splendor and the silver whiteness of the opposites, You are the invisible King who fills the abysses with your Omnipotence; You are Immortal and eternal, Ineffable, Uncreated, Father of all things, Lord of the ethereal immensity, Lord of Earth and Water, Air and Fire, Spirit of fire who vivifies all things, Supreme harmony, transcendent Number who reassumes the indefinite and determines it with Your Law, I invoke You, O Father.

All of you, Spirits of splendor, who carry in the worlds the seal of His will, and are flame of His flame, I call upon you to assist me, so that with your help I may become worthy of the supreme wisdom.

Let the source of my life be purified, the weight of matter be alleviated, so that I myself be the faithful mirror of the Living God and burn with sacred fire. Let the enlivening and bright ether pervade me, so that I may stay awake and

operate relentlessly; let me seek with perseverance and surely find, so that the day enveloped in the night may shine forever; may I live secure and no longer disturbed; may I always dwell in perfect peace; may the earth bring forth fruits, and the tree of life blossom, the flowing water return to the source of living waters.

O Master, let my will be strong and constant, so that my spirit may rise to You and be worthy that You may communicate to me to what You see fit.

Having said this, concentrate for *a long time* in the silence of your spirit, focusing on asking that it may be enlightened with the Light that comes from above and that it may be manifested in visible form, or else a spiritual message.

Keep in mind:

No matter how the Ritual is performed, you must wait at least three hours after eating. Since you need to operate with bare feet, be sure to put on the floor a small wool or cotton mat, or something similar.

Excerpts from *De Mysteriis*

Introduced and annotated by Tikaipôs[170]

We have included here some excerpts from *De Mysteriis,* a theurgical treatise of the Alexandrian age, attributed to Iamblichus, in order to present some states proper to the operations of ceremonial magic.

It may be useful to emphasize that the faculties operating in magic transcend those human faculties in the strict sense. Therefore, considering that in the context of ceremonial magic such a being is not excluded, in this and other similar texts we find statements that emphasize man's total passivity, the futility of human effort and of the "will" in these operations. However, the text also explicitly affirms that the Gods, in the operation itself, are not "other" in respect to the deepest nature of the mind. It is only *one* energy, making of God and of the mind one thing, that acts, by itself, "shining forth, operating all things univocally." Being inside this, the mind does not "go out," does not "fall into ecstasy," but instead adheres to its own perfection, to that *act,* of which its human state is only "being in potency." This act is identical to the radiant substance of the God, which strips the human spirit of its dark vesture.

Invocations, prayers, and everything else only help to propitiate these absolute states, by operating through subtle "sympathy." Thus we should not think that they *attract* God, as if he were subject to any kind of influence; nor should we think that the soul is stirred by passions on the part of God, since there is no action on his part, but an identification with God and a *realization* of God. Therefore, God's action and the participation of the soul in the state of pure activity, which no action from outside can affect, are one and the same.

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170. In the Italian version of this essay, the translation from the Greek was also done by Tikaipôs ("from the edition published by Th. Gale, Osconii, 1678"). Here we have utilized the English translation of *De Mysteriis* by Thomas Taylor. The italicization of certain words and passages reflects emphasis by Tikaipôs. (Editor's note)

In the first place, therefore, you say, "It must be granted that there are Gods." Thus to speak, however, is not right on this subject. For an innate *knowledge* of the Gods is coexistent with our very essence; and this knowledge is superior to all judgment and deliberate choice, and subsists prior to reason and demonstration. It is also co-united from the beginning with its proper cause, and is consubsistent with the essential tendency of the soul to the good.[171]

If, indeed, it be requisite to speak the truth, the contact with Divinity is not knowledge. For knowledge is in a certain respect separated from its object by otherness.[172] But prior to the knowledge, which as one thing knows another, is the uniform connection with divinity, and which is suspended from the Gods, is spontaneous and inseparable from them. . . . For we are comprehended in it, or rather we are filled by it, and we possess that very *thing* which we are (or by which our essence is characterized), in knowing the Gods . . .

Hence, as the Gods have an existence that is always invariably the same, thus also the human soul is conjoined to them by knowledge, according to a sameness of subsistence; by no means pursuing through conjecture, or opinion, or a syllogistic process, all that originate in time, an essence that is above all these, but through the pure and blameless intellections that the soul received from eternity from the Gods, becoming united to them.[173]

(*De Mysteriis*, I, 3)

You also say "that invocations are directed to the Gods as to beings that are passive, so that not only demons are passive, but likewise the Gods." This, however, is not the case. For the illumination that takes place through invocations is spontaneously visible and self-perfect; is very remote from all downward attraction; proceeds into visibility through divine energy

171. In Greek thought, the idea of the Good has an ontological meaning, not moral or virtuous. The Good is the *perfection* of a being, its state of *completeness*, as opposed to the sense of want and "privation," or insufficient and hampered activity. Thus in Aristotle, the Good is the pure act, the natural end in which it tends to perfect the energy of all imperfect beings.

172. Because in the normal idea of knowledge, the known object is something other than the knowing subject.

173. Elsewhere it is said the *symbols* are the basis for this.

and perfection; and as much surpasses our voluntary motion as the divine will of the Good transcends a deliberately chosen life. Through this will, therefore, the Gods, being benevolent and propitious, impart their light to theurgists in unenvying abundance, calling upward their souls to themselves, procuring them a union with themselves, and accustoming them, while they are yet in body, to be separated from bodies, and to be led round to their eternal and intelligible principle.

But it is evident, from the effects themselves, that what we now say is the salvation of the soul. For the soul in contemplating blessed spectacles acquires another energy, energizes according to another energy, and is then rightly considered as no longer ranking in the order of man. Frequently, likewise, abandoning her own life, she exchanges it for the most blessed energy of the Gods. If, therefore, the ascent through invocations imparts to the priests purification from passions, a liberation from generation, and a union with a divine principle, how is it possible to connect with it anything of passion? For an invocation of this kind does not draw down the impassive and pure Gods to the passive and impure; but, on the contrary, it renders us, who have become passive through generation, pure and immutable.

Neither do the invocations that implore the Gods to incline to us conjoin the priests to them *through passion;* but procure for them the communion of an indissoluble connection, through the *friendship* that binds all things together. Hence, it does not, as the name seems to imply, incline the intellect of the Gods to men; but, according to the decision of Truth, renders the will of man adapted to the participation of the Gods, elevates it to them, and coharmonizes the former with the latter, through the most appropriate persuasion. On this account also, such names of the Gods as are adapted to the sacred concerns, and other divine symbols, are able, as they are of an angogic or elevating nature, to connect invocations with the Gods themselves.

(*De Mysteriis,* I, 12)

Farther still, having said "that pure intellects are inflexible (i.e., not to be changed or altered) and unmingled with sensibles," you doubt "whether it is requisite to pray to them." But I think it is necessary to pray to no others than these. For that in us which is divine, intellectual, and one, or

intelligible, if you are willing so to call it, is most clearly excited in prayer: and when excited, vehemently seeks that which is similar to itself, and becomes copulated to perfection itself . . .

For the consciousness of our own nothingness, when we compare ourselves with the Gods, causes us to betake ourselves spontaneously to suppliant prayer. But from supplication, we are in short time led to the object of supplication, acquire its *similitude* from intimate converse, and gradually obtain divine imperfection, instead of our own imbecility and imperfection.

(*De Mysteriis,* I, 15)

Dissolving, however, the doubts in a way still more true, we think it requisite, in invoking superior natures, to take away the evocations that appear to be directed to them as to men, and also the mandates in the performance of works, which are given with great earnestness. For if the communion of concordant *friendship* and a certain indissoluble connection of union are the bonds of sacerdotal operations, in order that these operations may be truly divine, and may transcend every common action known to men, no human work will be adapted to them; nor will the invocations of the priest resemble the manner in which we draw to ourselves things that are distant; nor are his mandates directed as to things separated from him, in the way in which we transfer one thing from others. But the energy of divine fire shines forth voluntarily, and in common, and being self-invoked and self-energetic, energizes through all things with invariable sameness both through the natures that impart, and those that are able to receive, its light. This mode of solution, therefore, is far superior that does not suppose that divine works are effected through contrariety, or discrepancy, in the way in which generated natures are usually produced; but asserts that every such work is rightly accomplished through sameness, union, and consent.

(*De Mysteriis,* IV, 3)

That, however, which is the greatest thing is this, that he who (appears to) draw down a certain divinity sees a spirit descending and entering into someone, recognizes its magnitude and quality, and is also mystically persuaded and governed by it. But a species of fire is seen by the recipient,

prior to the spirit being received, which sometimes becomes manifested to all the spectators, either when the divinity is descending or when he is departing. And from this spectacle the greatest truth and power of God, and especially the order he possesses, as likewise about what particulars he is adapted to speak the truth, what the power is that he imparts, and what he is able to effect, become known to the scientific . . .

But to return from this digression: if the presence of the fire of the Gods, and a certain ineffable species of light, externally accedes to him who is possessed, and if they wholly fill him, have dominion over and circularly comprehend him on all sides, so that he is not able to exert any one proper energy, what sense, or animadversion, or appropriate projection of intellect, can there be in him who receives a divine fire? What human motion, likewise, can then intervene, or what human reception of passion or ecstasy, or of aberration of the fantasy, or of anything else of the like kind, such as is apprehended by the multitude, can take place? . . .

But it is requisite also to know what enthusiasm is and how it is produced. It is falsely, therefore, supposed to be a motion of dianoia, in conjunction with demonical inspiration. For human dianoia is not moved, if it is thus enthusiastically affected; nor is the inspiration produced by demons, but by the *Gods. Neither is enthusiasm simply an ecstasy;* for it is a reelevation and transition to a more excellent condition of being. But delirium and ecstasy evince a perversion to that which is *worse.* Hence, he who is an advocate for the latter speaks, indeed, of things that happen to those that energize enthusiastically, yet does not teach that which is precedent. But this consists in being wholly possessed by Divinity.

(*De Mysteriis,* III, 6, 7)

The Message of the Polar Star

[original in French]

It is eleven o'clock on the clock of the Universe: the Door is open and the elect are invited.

For the sword has pierced the bowels of the Woman and the Word has been uttered within the "depth of her Womb."

Sin no longer exists and in the New shining city, the tree of life already offers its first fragrant fruits to the kisses of the renewed sun.

The Prince of the World, the Great Convict of the first hour, has atoned for his fault and found his bride bathed from head to foot.

Blessed are those whose candle is lit at the new dawn; blessed are those who have opened their eyes to the light that shines triumphant in the heart of the Night, at the promised hour of renewal.

The Son sits on his throne and sends to the four corners of the world his faithful servants, charged to gather the harvest.

There is one more hour left to every creature, a brief yet decisive time. He who has ears to hear may still change direction and hasten to enter the Way and abandon Death.

The Cup is offered to all, but the wine must be drunk willingly, in accordance to the ancient wisdom that silence has preserved intact up to this day.

Now the lips are loosed and it is enough to listen in order to understand everything.

At first there was the *sign;* then came the *symbol;* today the era of *reality* opens.

Peace to all and joy to every just being.

Alexandria, Egypt, 1927

Sirius

Mist and Symbols

Nature speaks through silence, and yet only those who understand this may hope to know some of the secrets she harbors in her bosom.

When we arrive at this interpretation, to the point where the silence of nature becomes almost deafening while the noises of men do not bother us at all, we come to realize that every single phenomenon in the universe has a meaning.

Man walks on earth as a being who at a certain point in his life happened to become blind. He no longer sees, but sometimes remembers that he used to see: the more the memory of the past is alive in him, the more his soul adheres to the real substance of what is invisibly confronting him.

There is nobody who has completely forgotten everything and does not "recognize" any aspect of the world. The truth is that man, instead of stimulating his memory and attempting in every way to descend into the heart of things, attempts to forget and to transfer to immediate appearances the value of the reality that he intuits the presence of, but which he cannot attain without a spiritual effort.

Given this premise, it is no wonder that the interest of the higher man—who should be simply called *man*—is precisely focused on that which the majority of people pays no attention to. To the one, everything he touches is but a shadow; for the others, it is a solid thing. To the one, visible things are but the projections or shadows of invisible things; to the others, those very shadows are the beginning and the end: at most, they will grant a future beyond life, at the same time they deny that which exists prior to life.

If we could know the real structure of a flower or of a plant, we would be very close to understanding the real structure of ourselves and of our destiny. If we knew in detail the law that the corolla of a rose obeys when it spreads its petals, we would not need to look upward to see the stars, but could look downward and find the firmament there.

If we succeeded in knowing the secret of the seasons and in seeing inside the earth just as we see what is upon it, at the same time we would clearly see within ourselves, and would recognize without hesitation that the upheaval that changes substance in the earth is parallel to the upheaval within us.

Since the universe is one, monolithic and compact, there is no law in any domain that does not have an equivalent in another. Physics, geometry, algebra are moral sciences: the force of gravity, before being an active force in the domain of matter, is a force active in the domain of the soul.

Those who study the physical phenomena do not leave a door open to mystery, but close the door to truth, by mistaking for a voice that which is merely an echo. Those who study a ray of sun cannot see the eyes of which it is a glance. They will never find the unity of phenomena; instead of proceeding like a sculptor who unearths the statue chip by chip, they act like policemen looking for the perpetrator of a crime who is always on the run and elusive, so instead of trying to grab him, they try to arrest his footsteps.

The state of mind of the great majority of people deserves commiseration and pity, for they enclose the universe into two well-defined regions: one, consisting of phenomena the origins of which they are aware of, the other of which they are totally ignorant. On the one hand, the bright sun; on the other hand, an impenetrable mist. People are so persuaded that they have completed the inventory of created things and of possible phenomena that any phenomenon that slightly lies outside the number of those that are already known—or more precisely, that they think they know—is relegated by them to the domain of miracles, folly, or chimeras. Lacking wings, it is a wonder that they take no offense at the existence of birds. Even their notion of deity is childish: on the one hand, the earth; on the other, heaven; on the one hand, the natural; on the other, the supernatural; on the one hand, man; on the other, God. There is no contact, no connection between the two worlds and the two beings.

This is why the tangible reality of man, who still believes he knows it, has the illusion of knowledge; the more it is illusory, the more it is believed to be complete. When judging the physical world, man does not behave any differently from him who, knowing only one language, wishes to travel

abroad and expects to be understood everywhere, characterizing those who speak to him in a different language from his own as "dumb." This is why man, while believing he can dominate the world, is constantly at the mercy of that very world. The world, being ruled by a law of which he is ignorant, continuously proves his theories wrong, shakes his convictions, dismantles his intellectual edifices.

If it were not so, man would know at every instant that he is as far from reality as someone who, staring in the evening at the mist that rises from the rivers, would think he could fix it there, and, falling asleep, would expect to find it still there in the morning. The wise, on the contrary, know very well that the evening mist is just the visible synthesis of the human day; having all been spent among ghosts, it ends with the ghost of ghosts, namely the mist that obscures the sight and has neither weight nor face.

Ea

On the General Doctrine of Mantras

We have often employed the term *mantra* in the previous pages. From a practical point of view, Luce has already implicitly discussed it in reference to the "Names of Power" and the "Signatures" (see chapter III). However, it is opportune to lay out some theoretical elements, proper to traditional Hinduism.[174] An analogous exposition would also be possible from the perspective of the Kabbalistic tradition, and would also engender interesting comparisons.

In order to understand what a mantra is, it is necessary to adopt the perspective that considers all things in function of *sound* and *movement*. Everything in the universe is a vibration; this vibration has the living sense of *speaking*, of expressing the invisible world. It is movement as sounding word and revealing *Logos*.

However, in the experience of the word we can distinguish three elements: the mere sound, or "voice" (*vâkshabda = logos*); hearing *(pratyaya)*; and "meaning," namely the object evoked by any voice in those who hear.

If we extend analogically the experience of the word known by men, and if we properly interpret its elements, the doctrine of mantras seeks to give an account of the process of manifestation. From this results a particular interpretation of the traditional theory of the *three worlds*—or, better said, of the three main conditions of being, corresponding to three forms of possible experience. We must not forget that Oriental metaphysics never deals, as modern philosophy does, with "concepts," but rather with *experiences* that it does not invent, but merely expounds upon from the basis of the authority of those who have seen *(rshi)*.

The base experience and the supreme state is the absolute and infinite

174. The most complete work on this matter is J. Woodroffe, *The Garland of Letters* (London: Luzac, 1922). The main data presented here are derived from it.

identity *(brahman). It* is, eternal, without possibility of change, without name or form, ungraspable—it simultaneously "proceeds" *(prasarati),* determining a *logos,* and *logoi,* sound, and sounds; it evolves in the experience of a qualified world, with a duality of subject *(aham)* and object *(idam),* with different degrees of light, with various beings, both glorious and dark, beautiful and not beautiful, worthy and unworthy, subject to generation, change, and decay. As such it is *shabdabrahman* (i.e., *brahman* in the form of Word). It is a Wind that carries the Unmoved, the Soundless, the Ineffable, that which remains what it is as the light of the Great Game, center of the Dance, axis of the Wheel.

Thus, as the first state and as the supreme condition we may posit the experience of this duality-unity. The Word is first of all a mass of pure sound, radiant energy, constituting the so-called *vajra-âkâsha,* the ether of the "Diamond-Thunderbolt." The "meaning," or *artha,* of this primordial "Word," of this formless thunderbolt, is the supreme and hidden *brahman.* And yet the two are one.There is no room for an apprehension, or for *pratyaya:* here expression is immediate revelation—or better, self-revelation—spirit, eternal sense. *Artha* and *shabda* are one and the same. The well-known sacred syllable OM corresponds analogically to this primordial sound, wind, sound of sounds, which shatters the equilibrium of creative powers.

The state that hierarchically follows the supreme sound *(pârashabda),* is the *subtle sound (sûkshma-shabda).* Here the sonorous block is qualified, is pronounced in "letters," resounds in *logoi,* chisels moving figures in the homogenous mass of radiant ether, and determines "assignments" *(tanmâtra).* A world of "gods" *(devatâ)* awakens: powers of things in forms not yet materialized or yet made act, in bodies substantiated by rhythms that constitute the *subtle sounds* of particular gestures vibrating in a space that is not yet the physical one, echoing like words in an incorruptible, eternal ear. The *shabda-brahman,* namely *Brahman* as Word, manifests itself in these living and immaterial powers, which are different modes of being that, as *pâra-shabda,* are contained in it as in a "whole" *(pûrna).* Each of them carries a degree, an aspect, a seal of the supreme "meaning": the "partial meanings" in them, though they do not yet separate themselves, in a certain sense are distinguished from what in them is properly word or sound *(shabda).* These are, so to speak, the souls, the "spirits," the

Selves of the sounding bodies, or words, in which they are pronounced.[175]

When we talk about mantras (in the proper sense), we allude to these "bodies"; thus they allegedly are "Voices," the correlative *sense* of which is not a thing, nor the image of a God, but the God himself, in his form made of consciousness *(cid-rûpinî)*. Here the voice is not separated from the object, nor is this outside of the sound: the mantra is the God, and the perceptive or expressive actualization *(pratyaya)* of the mantra directly constitutes the presence, the *being* of its God *(artha)*. However, the God is the still aspect, the aspect of "silence," identity, form of pure flashing *(yjotirmayî)* that burst out from that *act,* that nexus of rhythm or motion, which constitutes its mantra.

These articulations of the "hidden Sound" on the subtle plane are the Second Mothers, or the incorruptible and generating (*mâtrkâ,* matrices) "Letters." From their combination, variation, and interaction, the doctrine says that all things and all beings of the universe are formed. However, not as they appear in sensible experience, but as they are in their causes. Such are their "Names"—in Western terminology, their signatures *(signaturae rerum)*. The Name would be the sound produced by the subtle force that generates or constitutes a thing or a being, but not as it echoes in physical air, but as it is directly perceived by the spirit in an inner ether, free of the restrictions of space and time, under the species of movement-in-itself, of pure, "continuous," homogeneous sound, rather than of material vibrations.

The names and the mantras are called radical or seminal *(bîjâ)* if they represent a given element as synthesis-essence, as a "whole"; they are called secondary if they only fix a particular virtue of theirs. For instance, the *bîjâ-mantra* of Fire is RAM,[176] whereas the "vortex" aspect of Fire is expressed by AG, its purifying element by PÛ, and the consuming aspect by HU or ASH.

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175. It is in reference to this phase that the symbolism of the divine couple is employed; the male god corresponds to the spiritual principle, and his "bride" to his "body of power."

176. All of the *bîjâ-mantra* end with the letter *M* in the nasal form, called *candra-bindu.* It is a sound made through the nose, without moving the lips; the nose echoes within the sound of the initial letter or syllable. Graphically, the *candra-bindu* is portrayed as ◌ं, whereby the half-moon represents *nâda*—the sound, the feminine *shakti* of the subtle plane—and the dot, or *bindu,* represents the *fixity* of the supreme plane. Starting from the material form, given by the verbal pronunciation of the first letters, the *candra-bindu* indicates the inner process aiming at translating the sound to the other two planes.

From the supreme state we have gone to the causal and subtle one.[177] From this we pass to the last state, to the material form of sound *(sthûla-shabda)*. Here the Word assumes the species of the spoken word, which is physically audible *(vaikharî-shabda)*; what occurs, then, is the law of duality proper to the complete manifestation. The Names and the subtle sounds are pronounced and projected into objects and living consciousnesses *(jîva)*. The three elements of a word—meaning, voice, and apprehension—are separated and become independent from one another. The *artha* is no longer a meaning or "light," but the object of which the word knows only how to evoke the external image through conventional meanings, mental associations, memories. The relation proper to the apprehension, to the *pratyaya*, is no longer essential, nor creative: it is no longer the "act" that captures the object in itself, in an intellectual transparency. It is based on data of the senses *(âpta)*, rather than proceeding from an active and direct intuition of the spirit *(sâkshâtkrta)*. While before the names constituted a *Universal Language*, which conveyed things as they are in themselves through a unique and absolute expression, now they are degenerated into the multiplicity of accidental and corruptible expressions designating them in various languages.

This is the material form of the word, which is the only one known to man. In his ignorance, he thinks that such a physical form exhausts the word; he knows nothing about the subtle form, nor of the causative and supreme forms that are asleep in the word itself—as well in physical movements—and without which the very thing that he knows would not exist or only be an incoherent sound.

In the doctrine discussed here, the very sound of sounds, OM, being everywhere, is also found in the body of men as the ultimate hidden depth of the force that animates them, gives them form, light, and resolve of the will. This is where we find the magical doctrine *(mâyâ-vâda)* of mantras in the narrow and practical sense. In short, it leads to a RESURRECTION OF THE LIVING WORD, to an awakening of the sound, in order that the "figures" made of pure actuality, which correspond to the subtle plane, may finally appear denuded of their sensible, corruptible, contingent form. According to a

177. In this exposition, I believe it is useful to include in single unity-correlation the subtle plane and the causal plane. Strictly speaking, the partition is quaternary: material state, subtle state, causal state (distinct from the subtle one and including *shabdabrahman*), and, finally, absolute transcendence as the supreme state.

symbolical etymology, the term *mantra* derives from *man* (*manana* = to think) and *tra* (*trâyate* = to preserve). This etymology points to an act of the mind in which the word is "preserved" or maintained in its primordial state.

No human word can, as such, be a mantra. However, due to certain occult laws of harmony *(candah),* certain archaic and sacred sounds are like a trace or echo of the mantras and of their *artha.* The practice of Mantra Yoga aims at awakening, from the material shape *(shtûla-rûpa)* of these sounds, their subtle form, the syllables of "light" corresponding to them.

No illusions should, however, be harbored. The texts clearly say that it is possible to practice *japa* (namely to repeat a mantra) a million times, but unless it is known, it remains a mere flapping of the lips. The enunciation of a mantra is essentially an act of the spirit, in which that moment of enlightenment and of inner awareness that arises every time one says, "I have understood," is taken to a higher plane and purified from any material residue. It is only at that point that the mantra awakens and "acts." The material enunciation becomes a vehicle of a magical or evocatory power only on this condition. Thus it is said that it is almost impossible to know the enunciation of a mantra unless one first learns it directly from a Master.

The repetition *(japa)* must be understood as "repeatedly shaking a sleeping person, until he wakes up." In some schools the auxiliary mantra IM is repeated seven times before and after *japa* in order to facilitate the fluidification of the main mantra. This is called *nidrâ-bhanga* (destruction of sleep). More specific instructions are given in the order of *chakra-vâda,* namely of the doctrine concerning the "power points" *(chakras)* found in the human body. The body, according to esoteric teaching in general, includes all the elements, in its dark depth eluding the ordinary wakeful consciousness. At the root of the body's vital force, in its subtle form, lies OM itself, which is the substance of all mantras. Thus the mantras of the various natural elements echo in particular qualifications of this force within the organism. Earth, water, fire, air, ether are sympathetically connected with fluid currents *(nâdî),* originating from five "life points," roughly corresponding to the sacral, prostatic, solar, cardiac, and laryngeal plexi. The corresponding *bîjâ-mantra* are LAM, VAM, RAM, YAM, HAM. The uttering of one of these *bîja* "touches" the center corresponding to it, activating its fluid current. Vice versa, by transferring and fixing the mental fire in

one of these centers as the consciousness attempts to assume the form of the mantra, the awakening or the "flowering" *(sphota)* of the mantra is facilitated.

What galvanizes the mantra is the spiritual strength of the operator *(sâdhaka-shakti)*. However, the virtue of the mantra is not only based on that. The mantra includes its own power, which, after joining the *sâdhaka-shakti,* exalts it, multiplies it, and makes it achieve a "leap" to a higher plane. Metaphysically speaking, this force of the mantra is not substantially different from the operator's, since the subtle sound and the material sound are not two different things, but two forms or states of the same thing. However, this energy in the effort of the operator is awkward, uncertain, and limited by the general conditions of individual existence: the mantra rectifies it, integrates it, stabilizes it, determining a further current of strength and of illumination that connects to the previous one, completing the transformation.

Thus, one text uses the image of a certain quantity of liquid that is rapidly added to that already found in a container, causing it to overflow. In another text, the *sâdhaka-shakti* is compared to fire. Just as air waves, when they meet a flame, increase its strength, likewise the energy of the operator, when it is hit by the mantra's *shakti,* grows rapidly and becomes very efficacious. In theory, at the time of the full realization of a mantra, the virtue of the individual practitioner is transformed into the virtue of the god presiding over it: he virtually becomes capable of anything this god is.

The Names and the mantras are liable to a double experimental verification: a) given a thing, the supersensible, yogic perception of the "sound" of the movement of that thing must correspond, approximately and analogically, to the mantra; b) vice versa, the right utterance of an entirely vivified mantra should produce the apparition of that corresponding thing or element.

Thus, if the mantra puts one in contact with the subtle plane, and if the latter is the plane of acts that sustain the sensible and material apparitions of things, and thus sustain those very things that are believed to be "inanimate," by vibrating a command in a mantra, it will bring about a magical realization. This, of course occurs at the risk and peril of the operator, in the sense that he must first consider whether he has the necessary strength to make the *female* (☿) of the corresponding fluidic vortex (which also

echoes, among other things, in the occult life currents of his organism, which now emerge from the depth of the "centers"), while he himself is the ⊙ before it and the concomitant reactions. This is the condition for the success of the operation, in the magical sense.

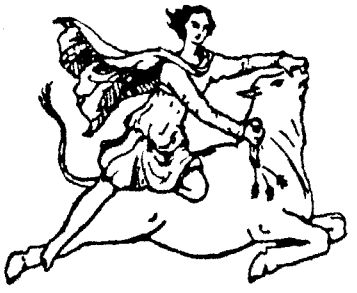
In general, in the awakened mantra the presence of the so-called "form of light" *(jyotirmayî)* is developed. The latter is said to be "liberation": as we have seen, it stands in relation to the rhythmic body of the mantra itself as meaning *(artha)* stands to the mere letter, word, or sound *(shabda)*. These presences do not themselves resound: they are "silences" standing in counterpoint to the pattern of subtle sounds. They lead to that which in the word is even deeper than qualification. When they are known in this manner, all the waves, the syncopes, and the shadows vanish; one then achieves the experience of *vajra-âkâsha,* the naked homogeneous ether of a word that is diamond-thunderbolt, and whose sign is ○. The "emptiness" *(shûnyatâ)* enclosed in the circle indicates something in relation to which this *vajra* state stands like a sound, corporeity, and incorporeity. It is *Brahman,* the supreme state.

From the point of view of *mantra-vâda* we may say: that which is at the base of things and commonly called "reality" is but a *symbol.* Man moves among symbols, and is himself a symbol, including his form, his speech, everything that he does.

In the sensible world, man find himself confronted by an alphabet or a system of signs, of which, due to a mysterious amnesia, he is ignorant both of the pronunciation and the meaning. Thus even its symbolic meaning eludes him. In the subtle world, it is the "state of pronunciation" that awakens in one's consciousness: from the sign emerges the memory of the word, of the sound—one no longer perceives forms and material bodies, but rather rhythms and gestures. Finally, the causal world (*kârana:* the "intellectual world," the κόσμος νοητός of neo-Platonism, the *Sophar* of the Kabbalah) is the state of the sound that transcends itself and is perceived as a "meaning." *The three worlds are in reality one world:* they are different "perceptive faculties" of an identity, or degrees of light in the same landscape. The Self knows one or the other, depending on its attitude, and on the degree of light and inner awakening that it can bring to life in itself.

345
ON THE GENERAL DOCTRINE OF MANTRAS

He who succeeds in *mastering* the "meaning" of things has the key to high magic. It all consists in achieving a state of intelligence, of significance before things. He who has comprehended a thing will also be able to *utter* it. This utterance is to "resolve" it as a thing and to virtually establish a magical relationship with it. Then the human word resurrects as *Logos*, or as a *living word*. Then words become *virtue* and *truth*. The mantras are mysterious flashes of this resurrection that are mysteriously trapped and dormant inside some archaic, hieratic, and primordial voices.



XII

Alba

De Naturae Sensu

(The Sense of Nature)

It is a long journey before one attains *awakening,* before one's consciousness gradually realizes, grabs, and fixes the more or less frequent hints and the sudden, unexpected echoes, through the use of memory. The range of these hints and echoes is various and infinite, ever new and full of wonder. I am talking about events in our ordinary life, things that surround us and occasion a series of thoughts and inner experiences, mysterious voices that arise from the depth of one's being and emerge to the conscious level. Then one experiences them as the fluttering of wings that attempt to take off toward the light.

There are two very wide fields that offer an inexhaustible harvest of such echoes: our own soul, and nature.

Let us look around ourselves: the world is man's book, provided he is able to see and hear the voices of things and feel the relationship existing between his life and theirs. For there is life in plants, in water, in the wind, in fire, in the stars, in the thousands of visible and invisible beings that are everywhere. There is life and spirit, too, in what we do not see but which surrounds us: Hades, the invisible.

Look at the earth: nature is the fertile mother, inexhaustible, even in the most elementary form of life, even in mud. The wind has blown seeds on rooftops, among the ruins of an ancient tower. These seeds find a bit of earth between a couple of stones and establish a way of life: soon a tuft of grass is born and lives on.

The earth, this immense quantity of matter that is transformed, spins around its axis, crumbles and reassembles, producing countless lives through countless and continuous transformations: it is none other than the symbol of our own body and our own flesh. This can be easily be understood by realizing the analogy between our physical life and nature, or between our body and the life of a tree, for example.

Observe some trees that have only a part of their roots in the earth, while most of the roots lie exposed, apparently lacking nourishment, and yet are alive thanks to the vital juices coming from the depths of the earth—then *feel* that in those naked roots and the rough trunk of the tree flows a vital lymph similar to that which feeds our bodies. Then vegetative life will no longer be a dead and meaningless notion. Bend down to observe a fragile green leaf, and feel with your fingers its thin fibers: smell the luscious smell of a rose, conscious that tomorrow all that may be left of it is the naked stem surrounded by scattered petals: and yet for a short time nature has smiled in the flower, happy to grow under the sun, transmitting to you her joy of a fertile mother, never tired, always inexhaustible. In the evening, some trees emanate an acute fragrance; you may not see them, but their smell is like a clarion call: become aware of that voice, the mute language of friendly *beings,* and feel the closeness of the great shadows in the shadow, living in their stillness in closer contact with the earth. The trees also communicate the impression of this contact with earth, vibrating in the breath of the leaves. The snow, covering everything with its whiteness, conveys a sense of sadness similar to that which emanates from the naked and barren trees during winter, because at that time we feel nature shut off in lethargy, and isolated in her concentration.

Observe the continuous flowing of a river; *feel* the water flowing in the earth, like blood in the veins—like the warmth of the sun giving light and life; like the warmth of the body. Or, on the shore of a lake, staring at the water, feel a living and real *something,* rising from the lake and getting closer. It is not necessary to have a vision or to evoke the Genius; it suffices to understand how the body of waters, which we can study from a chemical and scientific point of view, is the manifestation of real, yet invisible, spiritual intelligences.

The earth, the air, fire, and all the elements are constantly in our sight, in their various manifestations, and yet we fail to understand them. We seldom pay attention to air; we do not think about it, and we do not feel its fluid essence surrounding and penetrating all things.

In order to understand the deep meaning of the air, pick an evening, during spring, and try to focus your perception on the contrasts. When you walk, surrounded by the deafening murmur of a street enclosed between tall buildings, feel the multiform crowd swarming about, trapped in

the fog of everyday concerns, afflicted by physical and moral ailments, as the evening slowly descends on the city, the first lights are being lit and the blue sky is still bright. A sudden feeling, almost a sense of discomfort, penetrates us, accompanied by a yearning for liberation. Then realize in one's being the sense of the earth's heaviness, contrasting with the impalpable air. Lastly, proceed to solitude and to meditation.

A wave of vivifying purity pervades the soul before the light and the warmth of a flame; a prayer is more fervent and noble if performed by candlelight. Today we have almost lost the possibility of being near fire; we no longer have fireplaces lit by great burning logs, but the electrical current, which suddenly dissipates the faint crepuscular light.

Feel the sun, in a hot summer, as if you had become a lamp shining with a glowing light; the Sun is me, its light and warmth are in me—think this as you abandon yourself to the feeling of luminous joy, as you experience your body to be light and carried upward; feel the birth in you of adoration for the bright star, the Light, and recall the ancient cult of the fire-worshipers.

The wholly spiritual experience of light, of the sun in us, expresses the desire to ascend, while the feeling of physical well-being that comes from the sun's warmth causes an élan of exaltation, of expansion of the physical life.

We all have the possibility, latent or developed in varying degrees, to hear these *voices* coming to us from things, from nature, from within ourselves. These voices come to us through sensations and impressions that we did not create or will; they come when we least think of them, at a time of mental relaxation or at a time of inner peace. They are always preceded by an arcane sense of wonder mixed with anticipation, as our glance shifts to a plant, to a tree, or to a landscape. The will does not operate directly on them; the will and even the thirst for knowledge have only the task of organizing the experiences and developing them in a harmonious way, lifting them onto planes of realization and further adaptations.

Thus, having begun to know what vital force, similar to ours, is in everything that surrounds us, from a grass blade to an invisible atom, from the drop of dew to the luminous energy of fire, it is easy to come to realize the deep meaning of all things; that which is visible and real to us is nothing but the shadow cast by that which exists equally, but invisibly. The two planes are connected by symbols. That which is outside of us is in us under a different aspect. To feel in harmony with the life of things is the realization of this law.

The Earth is our flesh; Water is the purifying strength that it needs; Air is what is between Heaven and Earth, body and spirit. The spirit is the Fire that vivifies and enlightens everything, dispersing the shadows of matter, aiming upward.

Not only our physical existence is symbolized in nature, but we find in its various aspects deep analogies with our states of mind. We have the calm, the melancholy, and the violence of the sea; the ephemeral nature of grass; the aridity and fertility of the countryside; the fantastic whirling of the wind. In the diamond light of the stars, so far away from the earth, we have the isolation that sometimes is in us, in the abysmal and inaccessible depth of the Self.

In nature we constantly and clearly see the manifestation of the law of duality and of equilibrium that emerges from the ongoing contrasts of strength and weakness, of plus and minus. Among the cyclones, the storms, and the infinite grace of a small flower; mosses, frail grasses, and inviolate rocky mountains that seem to heave their heavy mass toward higher spheres with a tenacious effort, the refuge of eagles and butterflies.

Man appears as a creative, violent, and absolute force; woman as a comprehensive, receptive capacity that develops and reflects this force.

The sun and the wind: strength and violence.

The earth and green pastures: absorption and fertility.

For a gradual development of the sense of nature, it is necessary first to try to reverberate its various voices in us, following their unfolding in the annual cycle, from its blossoming in the spring, to its maturity and fullness in the summer, to its decline and its brief and apparent lethargy in the winter, which is profound concentration and preparation. Thus, begin to observe the environment in which you live.

Every object has, in its form, a particular imprint that bespeaks its deepest meaning and can cause an endless development of ideas, impressions, inner experiences that vary from individual to individual, depending on their particular attitudes.

Notice, for instance, that we do not perceive the *color,* but the form of some *colored objects;* a first idea of formless color may be suggested by the

fluttering of colored veils, even though the image is still very inadequate to convey the transcendent reality of color.

It is helpful to remember how much the spectrum of colors affects the spirit: the sense of rest that helps one concentrate may be induced by light shades of blue and green, not by red or white. There are various aspects of landscapes in different seasons and regions: an icy lunar landscape, a vast land, a boundless desert do not occasion the same feelings as a green valley during spring, or fields rich with harvest, or placid mountain lakes. The temperament of the inhabitants of a region varies with the region itself: poets often feel certain landscapes, which are actually inner states of being, and translate them in their poems.

In many cases, people's physical appearance, their profile, or smiles give away their nature, virtues, and vices. When we observe our own physical appearance in a mirror for a long time, we may be amazed that through this particular face and body we know ourselves and are known to others. The hand has a deep expression, just like the eyes, and it can reveal whether a person is spiritually close to us or not. Some people have the possibility of deeply knowing another person only after a few instants or hours of conversation. Then something wonderful and simple may occur: in a crowd, somewhere, a person suddenly feels somebody else's essence, who naturally is totally unaware of this at the time; the feeling one has in such a circumstance is as spontaneous as it is real. The human voice may also reveal much: one is happy to listen to a song in which a voice displays its various tones and inflections; if the song or voice is our own, we may experience a division, as one person speaks and acts and the other listens. This does not usually occur, because when we speak we follow our own line of thought, without paying attention to our voice.

In some privileged spiritual occasions, in perfect solitude, invisible lives beyond that of the human reveal themselves. The spirit may take notice of them, but not always, nor is everyone able to. Sometimes, as we are alone in a room reading or writing, all of a sudden we may sense we are no longer *alone*. Sometimes the presence of the approaching entity is so clearly perceived that we feel compelled to look in a direction, where we feel an invisible *somebody* watching us. Sometimes we may feel like bowing, as we realize we are in the presence of a higher being; then wonder is followed by a sense of peace, profound inner peace, and stronger resolution. The

spirit appears to be elevated, pushed forward by the fluttering of invisible wings. We feel these presences suddenly, unwillingly, though they are almost always preceded by a period of great purity of life, both inner and outer.

Sometimes one may even hear one's name being called, both when one is awake and asleep. Who is calling?

We may also experience the presence of different beings from the ones I have mentioned: these beings are very close to man, and they can communicate to him sudden fears, or different and weird impressions. Sometimes we may feel big laughing mouths around us, in a frightful attitude of mockery, belonging to beings that are not invisible, but are not perceived through the physical eye.

The invisible world may at times communicate with us as a wave of sudden terror, the depths of the abyss yawning under our feet; the icy fear of darkness; the sense of loneliness in a deserted place; the horror of sudden awful visions: these are all manifestations of the world of Fear, existing beyond the limits of human consciousness. At those times, either the spirit is so strong as to remain unshaken, strong, dissipating all fears, or Fear itself, as a fire fed by a mighty wind, crashes onto a person with various serious consequences.

Sleep is but a break, a shadow between the light of falling asleep and of rising up. One wakes up rested in the body, but often with the feeling of having been separated from life for hours, without remembering a thing, except for the chaotic images of one's dreams. At other times, we reawaken serene, feeling different; in those cases we can say that we have not slept at all, because as we stayed with our eyes closed, a *life* was in us. We have two lives that take us away from the ordinary state of wakefulness: in the first life, the body rests and the spirit, trapped in matter, rests. In that case, one experiences falling asleep as a sense of abandonment, or of a descent into nothingness. The second life, as the body sleeps, carries the spirit farther, toward a light, through infinite spaces; then the body has a sense of restful freshness, despite any previous sense of physical exhaustion. It is in this state of consciousness, which is not wakefulness, nor sleep in the ordinary sense of the word, that various visions appear. They may be bright shapes, shining with untold beauty, or horrible monsters, or ordinary human shapes, who are bent on performing strange tasks and who suddenly stop to stare

at us, giving us an eerie feeling that startles us. Thus, until we reach a certain harmony through the rhythm of Ritual, we will have mainly chaotic and disconnected visions, which gradually coordinate and arrange themselves in visible manifestations of a living and lucid symbolism. Their deep meaning, shining forth, explains many things and many inexplicable mysteries of the human mind.

In such *zones* the weaker spirit struggles, passes vertiginously from one state to another, falls into bottomless abysses of darkness, only to return by long, tortuous paths to the light that penetrates it and encloses it in itself, whereupon the whole spirit is transformed into a luminous body.

In some rare instances, people who are still alive and who are close to us through spiritual affinities may appear to us under a different guise. More ordinarily we perceive a doubling: it appears as a vision of ourselves reflected in a mirror or in a thin sheet of glass. Sometimes the vision is very clear and the form is completely exteriorized. Sometimes the face assumes a highly spiritual countenance; at times our *double* stares at us with wide open eyes. At that moment our inner core is pervaded by an icy shudder. At other times visions and symbols are explained to us by the invisible Unknown, which guides us and talks to us. By going further, one realizes that visions and symbols appear as a harmonious development, with an incredible connection between them, often in relation with events of one's past or future life. There are also many bright, external, and inner perceptions. Countless sparks, suffused light, luminous globes, until one attains the view of the *astral* eye, which is large and bright red—when staring at it, one loses entirely the perception of being a separate entity, and comes to see and feel the universe within oneself, beyond the limits of time, space, and things.

Among the most noteworthy signs are the mysterious voices that arise from the deep, at times of distraction, or when we least expect them, as we converse or work. From one's deepest depth of being sudden flashes occur, shedding light on a world once known but long since forgotten. They arise as words and voices whose meaning we do not understand, but whose sound seems to make us happier and better people. The soul listens to this distant music, becoming intoxicated with it, as the mind hopelessly chases questions with no answers, within the inviolable limits that only the spirit can transcend.

When listening to these voices, one sometimes wishes to create an ab-

solute inner silence, to even still the heart's beats, so that the elusive harmonies of the cosmic spheres may be perceived. One may even listen to the *sound* of one's own heart.

Sometimes when no sounds are perceived, one hears in the surrounding silence a *Silence;* then the heart shudders as if its beating were due to the sounds in the air. These are brief moments: the silence that emerged from the deep has for a brief time detached us from life: once every external sound and every thought has ceased, we sense the solitude and the freedom at the center of the universe. Then, as we come back into ourselves, we shudder as we feel the *flowing* of time and of the wave of life. It is a heartbeat of eternal life in contrast to our mortal life.

Sometimes we may feel as fluid as a wave: we experience *fixations* of thought, during which something sweet and tenuous rises from deep within, emerging at the surface of our sensibility. What we experience then is similar to the sensation of one who, lying on the water, abandons oneself, slowly feeling its coolness.

Sometimes the sense of detachment is sharper: one feels as if flying through infinitely open spaces, without any other sensation but of ascending, being suspended in the air, completely free from any bodily bond—a feeling of relief, like a long sigh following an oppressive situation. Then one's being, having left behind the bonds that tie it to the earth, is free in its own kingdom, in the realm of the spirit. Then the state of luminous joy pervading the soul is indescribable.

Haec ad magicam mysterii portam aperiendam claves. (These are the keys for opening the magic door of the mystery.)

At times we feel not living but dreaming, as if the very essence of life were destroyed in us, while the distant thought watches us live, observing us as if we were somebody else. This often happens in sudden bursts of yearning for liberation, which is found by inwardly isolating oneself. But one needs to be capable of this inner act; otherwise, due to the aggravating contrasts between real life and this sense of dreams, a state of tension and acute suffering sets in. We recall the deep, unexplainable sadness of adolescence, when, at the end of physical development, the spirit seems to awaken: then feelings of skepticism or mysticism ensue. These are real tests that lead to the victory of the spirit if the latter knows to have faith in a faceless and nameless Light, which it establishes within itself.

In general, we are well aware of living and existing, but not of *being*. We can affirm this only when we really feel a flame of the sacred Cosmos ignite within us: then we shall feel like a luminous, bright spot in the Universe. Only then will we safely overcome the spiritual crises that will unavoidably arise in us, similar to waves chasing other waves, wider and taller, against which an increasingly stronger resistance must be erected, lest we be submerged by them. The Ghosts of the dark sense of being lost, of the soundless Void, of icy Isolation, and of the total absence of value, will bar our path. They will appear frightening and unexpected, arising all of a sudden without a logical connection with the events of everyday life, sneaking in between joy and pain. We need to create a strength in ourselves that is invincible by virtue of itself; then every ghost will vanish as soon as it is formed.

This strength consists in the constant determination to remain calm and steady, to be able to dismiss every shadow of sad or evil thought projected by the denser element; in being able to master our own and other people's nervous waves; in having been able to create in us a serenity that sometimes we can derive from solitude, from the countryside, or from our inner world. Over joy and suffering, over the alternating of good and evil, the unconquered spirit must shine, as over the flow of human generations, ever unchanging and cold, shines the light of the stars.

In this state of spiritual calm countless calls will issue forth from nature, from our inner world: they are voices, impressions, presences, visions, and states of mind that can manifest themselves in different degrees of clarity to various individuals over any period of life. These at first obscure messages, which are eventually deciphered by the spirit, reveal to us a new, real world existing around us and in us. This knowledge will give us a double life, whose continuous and wonderful becoming will put us in contact with other planes of existence.

These calls, which are almost always sporadic and chaotic until the Rite has harmonized them with its rhythm, reach us so that we may awaken spiritually, no longer slaves, but masters of the flesh: so that we may become fully aware that the spirit that animates us is a spark of the great Fire that lives in the universe and whose igneous nature constantly aims upward.

Leo

Aphorisms

The following aphorisms are compiled according to the intention I expressed in my previous essay. Each of them is meant as a theme of meditation. Persisting in this meditation, they will produce results in the form of *knowledge*. They are derived from the content of my previous writings, and at the same time will help the reader to understand those at a deeper level.

The certainty of the *unreality* of the limits of our bodies and of our inner activity is the first step toward the expansion of consciousness.

To extend the sense of external reality to the most subtle changes of consciousness helps to sharpen the inner activity.

The feeling of power must be projected in a thrust toward the future. To feel it in the present is to come to a halt.

Man perpetuates himself in the cosmos, and the cosmos in man. It is not possible to really feel oneself unless one feels extended outside. It is not possible to spiritually penetrate the world without starting from the center of our being and continuing from there toward the world.

Man synthesizes in himself that which in the world has unfolded in time. The synthesis of the events assembles in him and becomes an actual event in his conscience—thus he overcomes the limitation of time.

Man has perennial relationships with the world; at the bottom of his being he can find the threads that prove to him the continuity of these relationships and the spiritual reality of that which surrounds him.

The human entity is also a cosmic entity; by abstracting from the sensible world and by maintaining the fullness of consciousness, through silence it may attain the knowledge of the cosmic essence.

A cosmic experience is the realization of the sense of duration of one's being in a coparticipation in the cosmic becoming *sub specie aeternitatis* (from the viewpoint of eternity).

In everything that moves, sprouts, grows, changes, and dies, we need to detect the presence of an invisible force. No event of nature begins or ends due to causes intrinsic in nature itself.

In the contemplation of nature, the sense of beauty consists in having a presentiment conjoined with wonderment and being unaware: it will be completed later on through knowledge.

Rhythm is a universal law. The sense of rhythm in man and in the world, and their harmonization, produces an awakening of consciousness and reveals the occult in life.

It is not possible to approach the occult in a detached way: the entire soul must be ready to vibrate, admire, and rejoice. Only in fullness can knowledge flourish.

The infinite and the sense of development must become qualities that are intrinsic in our consciousness: it is not possible to approach the world without this living sense in us. Without this sense of growth, of ascending movement, of rhythm, we remain behind in respect to our problem. The revelation of the invisible may be received only by eternal beings: those who feel themselves as having a beginning and an end will never be able to *know.*

Our bodies and our brains are "poor leaders" in respect to spiritual experiences. We must realize their obstructive quality and conquer it with an inner act. When the brain understands, it captures and intercepts that which appears to it and prevents it from entering into communication with the subtle centers: only that which is repeated and given a rhythm may shift to the spiritual, supercerebral consciousness.

The sense of freedom in the body is relative and illusory: it is not possible to experience freedom other than in a consciousness that forgets the body, that does not feel the body.

The imagination is not—in our field—autosuggestion. To imagine is to create. When one is able to foresee or to capture a state of consciousness and to fix it in the imagination, one has the first step of realization: imagination and reality meet each other and coincide in the centers of occult knowledge.

The organs of the physical body have a physiological function that is partially accessible to scientific investigation—and a function of relationship with a subtle body, the vehicle of life. Through the latter comes another order of relationships with a third body, of a higher nature. These ways are permeated by the sensory perception and by the motoric exernalization of impulses. Normal consciousness gives and receives only that which the brain can transmit. Spiritual activity avoids the brain and travels through other organs, in which the consciousness of normal man cannot yet establish itself.

When in an ordinary person the consciousness of the tired brain shifts into other organs, it becomes obscured and sleep is produced.[178] Simultaneously, the polarity of the body of life (the subtle body) and of the spiritual body changes.

The initiate can retain consciousness during the shift from the brain to another organ: then he becomes conscious of supersensible worlds that ordinary people see only in dreams. If he succeeds in maintaining the polarity of bodies and preventing the detachment, he has a vision of those worlds in the waking state.

The repair of the forces during sleep is due not only to "rest" but also to two other factors: the first is the ceasing of the tension of waking consciousness before the material world. The other is the contact with occult

178. This is why many people, when first beginning to experiment with preliminary initiatic techniques, succumb to a sense of sleepiness and evasion, which is induced by their consciousness. Their consciousness lags behind in respect to the shift of plane already mentioned. There are also those who, having misunderstood the whole thing, give up and do not go any further.

creative forces, with which we enter into relationship during sleep. They are the forces that have organized our material body and that alone are capable of keeping it together and of remedying its losses.

On the initiatic path, great mysteries are accompanied by small truths or by simple techniques of inner refinement that can lead one far.

Many people have the possibility of acquiring spiritual knowledge and yet do not realize it because they are looking for sensational methods, far removed from their daily activity. With what we have communicated so far in this book, one can make good progress toward esoteric realization. It is a matter of using patience, perseverance, and acute observation. Many people are very close to revelations capable of transforming them deep inside, and yet do not realize it, since they look far away for sensational phantasms.

Spiritual consciousness is perennial, continuous, and always active: it is necessary to feel the failure of consciousness that occurs during sleep as a pause due to a temporary limitation.

Every human act must be a preparation or an approach toward a higher consciousness: this is the basis on which a man must organize his normal life.

Man is a composite: of a material body that he sees, feels, perceives; of a vital body that holds it together; of a subtle body through which he sees, feels, perceives; of a spiritual essence that is the center of his entire being. One must remember this composite whenever one says "I."

Pietro Negri

Adventures and Misadventures in Magic

Those who take the time to read ancient and modern magical literature will soon realize that it contains a vast collection of experiences and feats, some of which were brilliantly successful, while others were total failures. Judging from the accounts of these experiences, one might be tempted to compare magicians to hunters and mountain climbers who, when recalling their adventures, always triumph over every animal or peak. The narrator never fails to enumerate and magnify the obstacles that arise and the perils that threaten the brave adventurer or experimenter, but all this is usually delivered as a salutory warning and instruction for the benefit of the neophyte reader; and whether or not the narrator himself appears to have taken them into consideration, everything tends toward a self-exaltation of the great skill and mastery of the experienced magus, who, *mirabile visu* (marvelous to behold), plunges into a jungle of difficulties as safely and triumphantly as the salamander *per ignes* (through fire).

This is why our readers may enjoy, for a change, the following truthful and modest account of a fiasco incurred by a friend of ours. We have not added or omitted anything from his story.

A TRUE ACCOUNT OF A MAGICAL INVOCATION PERFORMED IN ROME ON THE DAY OF THE SPRING EQUINOX, 1927

That night, unlike the Prince de Condé on the eve of the battle of Rocroy, I hardly slept. Even though I had set the alarm clock for 3 A.M., I did not place much trust in that bundle of springs and wheels, knowing full well from personal experience that the clock had occasionally missed the appointed hour, only to ring relentlessly twelve hours later. Thus, after two hours of sleep, which was often interrupted to check the time, I suddenly woke up before the alarm went off. I must say that the alarm went off at

the right time, with relative satisfaction on my part and, no doubt, to the great delight of the people sleeping next door. Not that my neighbors really deserved much consideration. I had begun the operations during the last full moon, and even though I did not say anything about it, the neighbors had sensed that something funny was going on and were determined to set obstacles in my path. Not only did they sense, but they must have really smelled the various perfumes that, despite my precautions, were coming out of my room during the suffumigations of the ritual operations; especially the suffumigation of sulfur, which had caused the vulgar crowd to complain. One evening, as they peeked through the keyhole that I had forgotten to cover, they saw a freak or lunatic dressed in a white mantle, standing in the middle of a thick cloud of dark smoke, doing and saying weird things. They became increasingly alarmed when the lunatic started to leave his apartment every night around 3 A.M., and come back to sleep around 6 or 7.

When the infernal racket of the alarm clock had at last subsided, I became absorbed in the usual ritual operations that I do not need to describe here. When I was done with them, and after performing a ritual ablution, I drank a quick cup of coffee, changed my clothes, and left for the place I had chosen and set up for the invocation. Considering what kind of neighbors I had, it was out of the question to continue to perform rituals in my own room. How could I have explained and justified to them the eventual and noticeable phenomena, such as the movement of objects, noises, voices, and *conversations?* And how could I have continued the enterprise for days and weeks? It was far better to take a twenty-minute walk and to reach our underground place where I was sure nobody would see, hear, or disturb me.

To be honest, the entrance to my hidden place was none too comfortable: I had to crawl on my belly through a narrow passage excavated underneath an ancient wall three meters thick. Then I had to go through a series of immense, tall, and lonely underground rooms. A deep darkness and solemn silence lingered in there, even during the daylight hours. Right at the end, in the middle of a vast room, descending a slope for a few meters, one entered a wide crypt, about fifteen meters long and over two meters high, doubly isolated from the outside, perfectly dark and silent, with no other openings except the entrance.

The night before I had laid out everything I needed at the end of the crypt: the lamp, filled with pure olive oil, was already hanging from the ceiling; the brazier; the coals; the sword. I had also marked on the ground the spots where the magical characters needed to be drawn. The crypt did not have a door, but that was no problem since nobody knew about the existence of this place. And even if an unfortunate visitor found it, crawled through the tunnel, and made it all the way to the vast hall containing the entrance to the crypt, he would certainly have stopped there when he saw the reflection of the mysterious brightness shining into the darkness from the magical lamp. Even I found the ghostlike light unnerving, though I knew where it came from. And who, having dared to look inside, would have come in at the sight of a white phantasm, standing in a cloud of smoke, wielding a sword?

The night before I had prepared everything I needed to take with me: the key to the cellar, a flashlight, matches, a white linen robe, the ritual perfumes, and so on. I put in my pockets as many things as I could and made a bundle of the rest: then I left. The night was cool and peaceful. Once in a while the moon would be visible through the narrow and deserted streets. Due to a rare and favorable coincidence, the full moon had occurred three days ago (the preliminary operations required three days); thus I could begin my invocation right as the sun entered the first degree of Aries, and end it on the first full moon of spring, which this year coincided with Easter Sunday.

I walked briskly to overcome the chill of the night and to avoid wasting any time, since the operation had to commence before dawn. Rome was very quiet: only the noise of a few cars and the occasional night tram broke the silence that loomed over the streets, the Forum, and the mighty ruins of Rome. Again, the fewer people I ran into, the better. After all, walking around the streets of Rome at 3 A.M. by moonlight, with a suspicious bundle under my arm, could be very conspicuous. The thought of running into a police patrol made me apprehensive, especially because I had inadvertently left my identity card at home. Imagine! What could I have possibly said to explain my whereabouts at this hour, and this bundle of peculiar objects? Because of this I was walking in a hurry: there was just one more square to cross, a narrow alley, round a corner, and wham! . . . I bumped

into two policemen and an officer. Oh well! Luckily, my old habit of self-control kicked in automatically: I did not startle, and did not draw their attention to me. I thought for sure that they would not detain me and question me: I thought it, willed it, and so it happened.

Two minutes later I was in the passage; the wretched obstacles were now all behind me, or so I thought.

The lamp, brazier, sword, and charcoal were all neatly arranged. It was not cold down there, but the humidity was bone chilling. The matches I had left there the night before were useless: thank goodness I had another box with me. Even the wicks of the magical lamp were damp, and I had a hard time getting them lit. However, once I lit them up, the three flames worked perfectly. There was no draft to agitate them, and so they cast a clear, warm, and diffuse light.

After lighting the lamp, I turned to the brazier. I took it outside the crypt, so as to more easily ignite the charcoal by the light of two candles. But I realized that the coals had become so damp that I could not ignite them. After blowing on the flame with bellows and lungs, the darn coal finally lit up; now I only had to keep it burning. In the meantime more time had elapsed than I had calculated.

I changed quickly and, donning the linen robe, walked down into the crypt, holding the brazier and being careful to keep it going. I took the ritual perfumes and poured a handful on the coals; suddenly a thick and odorous smoke arose, yet not strong enough to hide the light of the lamp that continued to burn calmly. And as the perfume continued to spread around the crypt, I took a piece of coal and drew with it the magical characters of the ritual at the four cardinal points, and then, still using the coal, made the sign of the operation in the middle of them. I placed the brazier on this middle point, as a thin smoke continued to rise from it. Here I was; all I needed to do was to add a little more perfume to the fire and begin the invocation.

I began to concentrate and all of a sudden, my mind, which until then had been absorbed in the various details and material difficulties I have described, clearly realized what I was trying to do. I did not fear or hesitate; and yet I wondered whether it was not too bold on my part to raise my still earthbound gaze to the heavens, to such high powers of the solar hierarchy. Certainly the daring was great, but this was one more reason to

act in a resolute and decisive way . . . and right away too, since this darn coal was giving me a hard time. If the coal stopped burning, good-bye smoke and good-bye invocation: I would not have time to light it again, and, worse yet, I could not change the order of operations. I bent over it and blew on it with all my strength; finally, the Gods be praised, the fire started again and emanated light and heat.

I threw another handful of perfume on the fire; held the sword as prescribed by the ritual; put on my glasses; took with the left hand a scroll previously prepared so that I could unfold it using only one hand, and started reading the long invocation from it. I turned eastward, pointed the sword in direction of the sign of the operation, and, fully aware of my actions, began slowly and firmly to read: "O most high power of all powers . . ." I was happy to notice that the light of the lamp allowed me to read the words of the invocation and that everything was going as planned. But what was happening now? What was this wind? Why did it blow just now, shaking the flame of the lamp, disturbing the reading? Now what? I could no longer see. By all the Olympian Gods! My glasses fogged up! I had sweated profusely thanks to the darn coal, and now, because of my perspiration and all the humidity in the air, tiny beads of water began to form on my lenses; the physical explanation of the phenomenon was all too clear, but—I could no longer see . . . I should have taken my glasses off and wiped them clean, but in order to do that I would have had to interrupt the operation. I only have two hands. In one hand I was holding the sword and I could not change its direction. With the other hand I was holding the scroll. Worse yet, how could I interrupt the ritual halfway through, with such forces already unleashed? I noticed how the wind was lifting the smoke and shaking the flame. By all the living Gods! The lamp almost went out.

In a matter of seconds, due to a minor difficulty, the events were turning sour. The good Socrates used to say that the eyes of the soul begin to see clearly when the eyes of the body begin to lose sight. A consoling thought, but it would have been better yet if the lenses had not fogged up. I did not like the way things were turning out. All of a sudden I felt dizzy, sick. Be careful! I said to myself. Be calm and pay attention! I began to shiver—could it be with fear? Suddenly I became afraid of fear itself, and

not being able to restrain it. I imagined the consequences and saw myself stretched out dead on the floor . . . and promptly reacted. I came back to my senses and with a sudden fierce resolution I resolved to go on to the end, no matter what. In the meantime some of the mist on my glasses started to dissipate. Once I started to recite the invocations, my memory came to my assistance and I was able to finish, though with some difficulty. However, in the struggle against the pitiful, unforeseen material difficulties and with the complications they had caused, I was not able to adequately concentrate my spiritual energies: and maybe this was the reason that the invocation did not attain the results I was hoping for.

By the time I returned home at 6 A.M., I was thoroughly exhausted. And I slept . . . like the Prince de Condé.

The following morning I took care of those glasses.

Various Commentaries

"MEMORIES" AND "VOICES"

In chapter X, Leo talked about a form of supersensible knowledge that is analogous to a *remembering*. Knowledge is transformed and no longer appears as a representation or as a concept, but almost as a memory, as something that arises from within and that belongs to us. The corresponding attitude of the spirit may be nurtured through the following exercise. In the evening, try to review *backwards* the content of everything you have experienced during the day or a part of the day. However, it is not a matter of "representing" in one's mind the various separate events, but rather of *creating a rhythm*, the active perception of a *continuity* working backwards, not in the mind but rather in a sense of interiority, by remembering. What matters is to focus more on the act that the spirit is forced to perform (until you can reproduce it *without* content), rather than on that which is being recalled.

In regard to the mantras and to the inner ear that is capable of abstracting from the material sound and perceiving the subtle sound of things and voices, we should begin with a discipline that distinguishes, through *active attention*, the message connected to the different quality of sounds. Ordinary people in this regard are extremely distracted. They passively and hurriedly receive the physical vibration and automatically translate it into ideas; in other words, they identify with the emotions or reactions that it produces. Their auditory attitude, whether in regard to a man's voice, an animal's voice, or a mere noise, is basically the same. People live without understanding, surrounded by a world of sounds. What matters instead is to educate oneself in order to be able to *hear* the different qualities within the sound; in this way, one will subtly perceive what its background stems from—a living being, whether person or animal, or from a mere clash of things. Again, one needs to direct one's attention on this element, by identifying with it, allowing it to speak through the mere sound, excluding everything that comes from within oneself. This *awakens* one's ear to a certain degree, and helps one realize the

state of deafness in which one lived before.

The practice of the Hindu doctrine of mantras corresponds largely to the use of *dhikr* in Muslim esotericism. We can find details of this in the writings of Al-Ghazzali. The *dhikr* may simply consist of a "divine name" of Allah himself, or of the abstract form of *hu* (Him). In regard to individual practice, ritual isolation is strongly recommended, including the detail of symbolically covering one's head (e.g., the hood of Christian monks). The *dhikr* is incessantly repeated with one's mind focused on it, until one reaches the state in which the lips and the tongue stay still and the repetition takes place only "in the heart." Yet even this "sound" moved into the heart has its own form. This form needs to be overcome by proceeding and intensifying the rhythm until the echo of the *dhikr* in the heart ceases, just as its physical pronunciation did. At that point, the "spirit" of the *dhikr* and its immaterial essence (= *artha*) are revealed; then one realizes them to be the essential part of the very Self of the practitioner.

In Islam, in many cases the practice of *dhikr* has lost much of its purity as an exclusively inner and intellectual practice, and has acquired the form of a collective practice. The uninterrupted cadence and repetition of certain formulas in this instance acquires a more or less hypnotic result, in order to neutralize the ordinary mental faculties and to propitiate paranormal states. The quality of these states is dubious unless the entire collective practice is supervised by a Master, a qualified *sheik*.

The use, or the abuse, of the liturgy in some so-called contemplative Christian monastic Orders (e.g., Carthusians or Carmelites) has roughly this second significance. It is not a mantric practice in the purest state, since it is virtually impossible to *realize* the liturgical formulas in any inner dimension they may have, in the course of their various and uninterrupted sequence lasting for several hours. Rather, the process aims at that which in Hindu terms may be characterized as the "slaying of the mental" (slaying of *manas*), namely, to the neutralization of the mind. The Christian monks assume that once this state has been achieved, an "action of grace" may be evident in a sense of spiritual enlightenment. The practice of the repetition of the divine names, which is similar to the active practice suggested by Al-Ghazzali, was followed by the Eastern churches, and still apparently plays a role in the monastic disciplines practiced at Mount Athos, being associated with breathing exercises (as in the case of some Muslim and Hindu schools).

The latter practice is found in a more characteristic way, with a precise magical-initiatic intention, in the practice of the Kabbalah.

DECADENCE OF THE WORD

Thinking of mantras in their aspect as *universal language* and *essential language*, various ideas could be developed concerning the origin of languages, which can only have been *sacred* and from above. Joseph de Maistre made some interesting remarks on this in his *Saint Petersburg Evenings*. Until secular philology produces a sacred science of language, many doors will remain closed in relation to what the *word* signified in primordial civilizations and what was preserved of it in later ages, as fragments mixed up with all kinds of debris. The process of the fall of the word not only refers to the change whereby it is understood only in its material, particularized, and spiritually dead form, but it can also be detected in the domain of the decayed word itself. If we needed a supplementary proof that mankind's "development" has not been an "evolution" but exactly the opposite, one could be given by the obvious poverty, inorganicity, and superficiality of modern languages as compared to the ancient ones in which a certain connection with the sacred languages was still present. The extreme limit of a language that is two dimensional, utilitarian, and stenographic rather than truly articulated is probably the modern English language. Likewise, there is no doubt that the Anglo-Saxon civilization in general, ending up with America, represents the limit of the entire Western "progress." Conversely, among the living Western languages that still retain a certain premodern, rhythmic-organic character in its structure is the German language, which curiously enough differs in this regard from others of the same Nordic family. This, however, is an order of considerations that we will not dwell on at this point.

MORE ON THE INITIATIC DOCTRINE OF IMMORTALITY

In regard to the *initiatic doctrine of immortality* (chapter V), some people have accused us of having "gone too far" when we denied the element in religion corresponding to the notion of an "immortal soul" with which every person is endowed. Even admitting that immortality, as an effective experience for man, is not a given fact but rather a possibility and a task, it does not necessarily exclude the existence of eternal principles in the hu-

man being. According to our critics, these principles have always existed and have always operated in mankind, even though people have not been aware of them.

To this we reply that even if such eternal principles really existed, without the Self becoming aware of them, much less being able to activate and assimilate them, from the *positive* and *experimental* perspective of the initiatic path vis-à-vis the Self's *own* immortality, it is as if they did not exist. The consolation would be analogous to that supplied by a materialist who declared that although the "soul" dies with the body, the matter of which a person is made remains indestructible.

For instance, a table may exist or not, and I may or may not be aware that it exists. We cannot say the same thing for the Self. There is no Self on the one hand, and awareness of it on the other, but rather the substance of the Self is consciousness itself. Its being consists of its being conscious. Therefore, we cannot imagine that something of the Self could continue to exist once its consciousness is extinguished, in the same way that the table continues to exist regardless of whether one looks at it or not. When consciousness is extinguished and the sense of self-identity disappears, the Self also disappears, and that which may continue to exist, whether eternally or temporally, whether materially or spiritually, is no longer that Self.

We have readily admitted from a doctrinal point of view the existence of a Self of which the human "Self" is but a pale reflex, corresponding to the *atman* of the *Upanishads* and to the *purusha* of Samkhya. However, that which a person experiences as his or her own "self" is not such a Self but only its pale reflection. If one prefers, one can speak not of the soul's dissolution at death but rather of the reflection that is reabsorbed into the transcendent principle that has projected it.

In religious terms one could say that the soul is being reabsorbed into God. Yet one must admit that the same thing is being said in different words, because between the reflected Self and the absolute Self there is no continuity; the reabsorption of the former into the latter corresponds for all practical purposes to its dissolution. Things may be otherwise only in the presence of an active and conscious integration of the image or reflection with its own source, which, of course, is the purpose of initiation, in its various degrees.

As far as the other elements that survive the human soul are concerned,

leaving aside its residues and its psychic fascimile that is itself destined to die, what is left is what the Hindu tradition calls *karma,* the object of so much speculation by the Theosophists. Even that which is connected to karma has nothing to do with real immortality, since this is an interplay of impersonal forces within the sphere of conditioned or samsâric existence. The corresponding teaching is that just as man through physical generation may bestow existence on another individual who is distinct from him and to whom he passes on his biological and genetic inheritance, likewise his actions may determine a force that could generate another being, the characteristics of which will have some kind of relation to those very actions. Such is karma, and this is why it has been taught that when a person has dissolved into the different components that return to their original sources, what remains is karma.[179] However, as we have already said, in this entire process, which is erroneously represented as the reincarnation of the "immortal soul," there is no basis for the continuation of a self-identity, namely of a Self, since on this plane continuity is simply impossible. The best image we can offer is that of a flame that lights another flame: the fire is the same, and one flame generates the other, and yet it is a different flame from the first one. In the karmic domain, this is how things are. It is an order of things that are, in their own way, "physical," and which do not apply in the least to the destiny of the spiritual personality.

Much more interesting are the considerations about the case in which a group of existences and therefore of "Selves" may be considered as many manifestations and incarnations (though not reincarnations) of one and the same principle of a superior order, which, having entered into the "stream," namely into the system of conditioned and contingent reality, aims toward perfection. In this case, each of these existences and these "Selves" assumes the meaning of a single attempt that goes more or less forward. One image would be many assault waves of a single army: after one is launched, reaches a certain position, is destroyed or scattered, another wave follows, and then others, going more or less farther than the previous ones, at times gaining ground and at times losing it. Eventually, one of these assault waves *may* achieve the original purpose shared by all the previous ones: then the series ends. Likewise, if we imagine these as-

179. *Brhadâranyaka-upanishad,* III, II, 13.

sault waves to represent the individual Selves and various existences, not even here do we need to talk about reincarnation because it is not as if a wave is continued into the next. Rather, if a wave does not achieve its purpose, it becomes scattered and exhausted; the unity may be found elsewhere, namely in the army to which the assault waves belong, and in the common purpose that has animated their separate efforts. Ibsen's symbol of the "man who melts buttons," namely buttons that are not up to standard, in order to produce better ones, may be applied to this order of ideas; the same principle, with precise reference to initiatic views, is often found in Meyrink's books. The "perfect" button and the assault wave that finally achieves its purpose after all the other ones have been decimated correspond to the being in which the above-mentioned initiatic reintegration is achieved, and which is identical to the type of the "Awakened One."

IMMANENCE AND TRANSCENDENCE

Some people, who approach the domain of initiatic disciplines with great interest, often ask us questions such as these: "We follow you on everything that concerns practice. However, we do not fully understand your definitive point of view about the supreme spiritual problems. Does your teaching proclaim *transcendence* or *immanence?* Do you believe in a *personal God* or not? You need to clarify your ideas about this."

Clearly these questions show a residual influence of the demon of philosophy and of the abstract way in which spiritual problems are dealt with in the common mentality. In any case, it is possible to give an answer in the following terms.

From an initiatic and experimental point of view, the dilemma of "either immanence or transcendence" does not exist, since immanence and transcendence do not correspond to two philosophical systems to be chosen according to one's fancy and on the basis of various speculative preferences, but rather correspond to two points of view, both of which are real. That which one regards as immanent, the other may regard as transcendent, as perspectives change.

On the cosmological and theological plane, every true initiatic teaching can only be translated into a doctrine of transcendence, because in either form it will always admit a principle that is not exhausted by creation or "manifestation," which lies beyond not only any natural, but also

any heavenly and divine form of existence. However, on the practical plane, in reference to mankind and to its possibilities, the perspective is twofold, as we have said.

As long as a man remains a man, unless his worldview is utterly barren and truncated, transcendence is true. True spirituality must necessarily be perceived by him as "other," endowed with the same characteristics of bright distance, inaccessibility, and uninhabitability that glacial peaks possess in the eyes of valley dwellers. However, in the adept the perspective becomes inverted, since his is almost the point of view of the peak: he has taken residence in the central, metaphysical element; thus, if he perceives anything as extraneous and distant, it will be the human and sensible world.

Thus one should not pose the "philosophical" problem of immanence or transcendence, but rather ask *in respect to whom* something is declared to be immanent and *in respect to whom* something is declared transcendent. In other words, it is necessary to establish the system of reference. The fact that in initiatic teachings and even in the pages of this book some principles are sometimes regarded as immanent and sometimes as transcendent constitutes a mere difference in terminology; to those who understand, it does not affect the essence in the least.

What shall we say about the question of a "personal" or "theistic" God? Does esotericism have any room for him? Certainly; but first we need to establish in what way. In many religions, including Christianity, he passes for the ultimate reference point. Not so in the initiatic teachings. The "personal God" (Hinduism's Ishvara) is itself a manifestation and should not be equated with the unconditioned and the transcendent. The latter is necessarily exempt from form and personhood, though it is at the base of every form and every person, beginning with divine forms and persons (e.g., the Blessed Trinity, the twelve Olympian gods, the Hindu Trimurti, etc). Various mystical groups have adopted this reference point, though in a confused and passionate way. Esotericism, on the other hand, makes it clear and precise. Thus not even here do we find antitheses or alternatives. The personal God exists and is true from a certain point of view, which is, however, hierarchically inferior to that espoused by every initiatic and metaphysically complete teaching.

The antitheses in this regard cannot be upheld by those wishing to defend the initiatic perspective; they can arise only from those who want

to make absolute an inferior point of view, which is what the theistic perspective is. These people are totally unaware of the contingent reasons that, in some traditional forms, have made this limitation of knowledge opportune. Obviously such antitheses, born out of ignorance, can never be valuable in the higher, initiatic domain. And wherever we detect a tendentious emphasis it is even possible that it betrays suspect influences, most likely related to the so-called "counter-initiation." Some people may regard it as the greatest paradox that some religious and "traditional" forms, in their militant, apologetic, and exclusivist attitudes, fall victim to those forces of obstruction and inversion that they call "diabolical"; and yet this is how things are, especially in our day and age, in many cases. . . .

UNREALITY OF HEAVY BODIES

If we have thus rightly described the Authentic Existent, we see that it cannot be any kind of body nor the under-stuff of body: in such entities the Being is simply the existing of things outside of Being. But body, a nonexistence? Matter, on which all this universe rises a nonexistence? Mountain and rock, the wide solid earth, all that resists, all that can be struck and driven, surely all proclaim the real existence of the corporeal? And how, it will be asked, can we, on the contrary, attribute Being, and the only Authentic being, to entities like Soul and Intellect, things having no weight or pressure, yielding to no force, offering no resistance, things not even visible?

Yet even the corporeal realm witnesses for us; the resting earth has certainly a scantier share in Being than belongs to what has more motion and less solidity—and less than belongs to its own most upward element, for Fire begins, already, to flit up and away outside of the body-kind.

In fact, it appears to be precisely the most self-sufficing that bear least hardly, least painfully, on other things, while the heaviest and earthiest bodies—deficient, falling, unable to bear themselves upward—these, by the very down-thrust due to their feebleness, offer the resistance that belongs to the falling habit and to the lack of buoyancy. It is lifeless objects that deal the severest blows; they hit hardest and hurt most; where there is life—that is to say, participation in Being—there is beneficence toward the environment, all the greater as the measure of Being is fuller. Again, Move-

ment, which is a sort of life within bodies, an imitation of true Life, is the more decided where there is the least of body—a sign that the waning of Being makes the object affected more distinctly corporeal.

The changes known as affections show even more clearly that where the bodily quality is most pronounced, susceptibility is at its intensest—earth more susceptible than other elements, and these others again more or less so in the degree of their corporeality. Sever the other elements and, failing some preventive force, they join again; but earthly matter divided remains apart indefinitely. Things whose nature represents a diminishment have no power of recuperation after even a slight disturbance and they perish. Thus, what has most definitely become body, having most closely approximated to nonbeing, lacks the strength to reknit its unity: the heavy and violent crash of body against body works destruction, and weak is powerful against weak, nonbeing against its like.

Thus far we have been meeting those who, on the evidence of thrust and resistance, identify body with real being and find assurance of truth in the phantasms that reach us through the senses, those, in a word, who, like dreamers, take for actualities the figments of their sleeping vision. The sphere of sense, the Soul in its slumber; for all of the Soul that is in body is asleep and the true getting-up is not bodily but from the body.

(Plotinus, *Enneads*, III, vi, 6)[180]

A MISTAKEN WAY

This love (of the soul that has its proper reason—*logos*—outside itself) is like a gadfly tormented by unsatisfied desire, because no sooner has it got satisfaction than its (substantial) want persists. It cannot be satisfied because a thing of mixture (of self and "other") never can be so: true satisfaction is only for what is plenitude in its own being; where craving is due to an inborn deficiency, there may be satisfaction at some given moment but it does not last. Love, then, has on the one side the powerlessness of its native inadequacy, on the other the true satisfaction that is solely of the (self-sufficient) nature of the Logos.

(Plotinus, *Enneads*, III, v, 7)[181]

180. Translation by Stephen MacKenna. (Editor's note)

181. Translation adapted from MacKenna. (Editor's note)